



KIDCARE CANADA

nurturing the best possible start

Video Specific Discussion Q & A



Born to Communicate - Chapter Three

Babies are Born Ready to Learn

Categories of questions:



Short answer questions (help participants to warm up and connect to their previous learning)

- *Can babies hear in the womb?*

ANSWER: Yes they do! Beginning in the second trimester, your baby can detect sounds from outside your body. By 9 weeks of pregnancy ears are beginning to form. By around 16-18 weeks of pregnancy your baby is probably detecting noises from your body (e.g. heartbeat) and by week 24 they hear muffled sounds from outside and will turn their head in response. <http://www.whattoexpect.com/pregnancy/fetal-hearing/>

- *Are babies born already familiar with the language(s) spoken by the mother?*

ANSWER: Yes – research shows that babies respond differently to a familiar language.

- *Are babies born ready to learn language?*

ANSWER: Yes – Research confirms that babies are born ready to learn any of the world's languages including sign language for babies who are born deaf.

- *Does a baby learn best in a quiet, alert state?*

ANSWER: Yes - Similar to adults, being fed, calm and well-rested is the best state for learning. New parents soon learn to recognize what this looks like. Also similar to adults, a highly emotional state is not the best time to learn.

- *Can brain scan techniques show how new babies respond differently to a foreign language than to the one normally spoken in their environment?*

ANSWER: Yes – the very safe infra-red technology enables researchers to easily confirm that babies respond differently to unfamiliar languages.

APPLICATION

Personal experience questions (help participants apply what they have learned – make it personally relevant and meaningful)

- *Describe a baby in the “quiet alert” state.*

ANSWER: Most parents will mention things like their babies eyes are open, baby is not crying, baby seems calm. This may happen when a baby is well-fed and can also happen during feeding or a diaper change. This is an idea time to talk to baby, explain things, sing, play, and smile! With a very young baby, this may only last for 30 seconds or a minute. As babies get older their attention span increases.

- *Have you noticed a baby who changed behaviour when curious about a sound? What happened?*

ANSWER: A baby might possibly turn to hear the sound, suck more on breast or pacifier, they might go quiet or start to cry.

- *How do you interpret it when a baby looks at something for a long time?*

ANSWER: A baby’s gaze will often linger on something novel. However, it can also mean they are confused. One of the reasons it is strongly recommended that babies are not exposed to one-way screen time (e.g. adult TV shows) before they are two because the images can be misinterpreted. However, Skype seems to be different because it enables a two-way responsive communication with a known and loving family member. Babies can learn to react to familiar people through Skype. The same is likely true for reading to your child via a book or a mobile devices. Babies can only learn at this stage from a human being. They do not learn from technology directly. There needs to be human interaction at this stage.

- *Have you noticed a baby respond to a familiar voice in a special way?*

ANSWER – depending on the age of the baby, the responses will vary. Even a newborn will turn his or her head towards a familiar voice. Older babies smile, respond with gurgles and can get quite excited. If a baby is upset they might calm down when they hear a familiar voice.

- *Have you ever talked, read or sung a song to a sleeping baby? Why?*

ANSWER: Parents may say that they cannot help it! Many will say they notice the baby becomes even more relaxed and the voice can even bring a smile to a sleeping baby.

REFLECTION

Open-ended questions (help participants reflect and move towards deeper learning)

- *What things can parents do to encourage babies to focus on language?*

ANSWER: Parents might describe many things that show the baby is the centre of their world, such as:

- looking into baby's eyes while talking
- repetition of sounds
- repeating sounds that the baby makes
- introducing rhymes (well known or made up – perhaps with baby's name in them)
- Singing songs in any language
- Pointing to pictures in a book while telling a story.

They may also describe almost anything that creates a connection between the baby and the warm parent/caregivers' and language or anything that creates a warm association between language and being interested in the baby.

- *Although babies are most familiar with the language spoken around them, they are ready to learn other languages as well. How is this so?*

ANSWER: Babies are born ready to learn any language. Neural connections in babies brains used frequently become stronger and the connections not used in the early years are “pruned” away.

- *Nursery rhymes have simple patterns. Why do you think that is? Is it related to the way babies learn?*

ANSWER: Modern brain research shows that our brain learns through repetition and patterns. It is no surprise that societies around the world, in every culture for hundreds of years have incorporated patterns into their songs and rhymes for babies and young children.

- *What kinds of stories do you think babies enjoy most? Why?*

ANSWER: Stories about them! Stories about their families, their culture and traditions and stories that involve repetition. Traditional stories have incorporated these things because they are appealing, predictable, and help children feel secure. Even stories with some scary elements are much loved because children anticipate the happy ending.

- *How do babies show it when they are interested in something and how does this contribute to their relationships with others?*

ANSWER: Young babies show interest by being alert and making eye contact, and body language. Older babies add to this communication by gurgling, laughing, smiling, etc. It creates a positive feedback loop. An ideal way to encourage this is through serve

and return – saying something and allowing time for the baby to respond. A note of caution, when young babies are overstimulated they might turn their head away, yawn or even cry and that's a good sign for us to give them a rest.

All questions are examples only and have been designed to be modifiable. They are currently framed for professionals who support families.

If your audience is comprised of parents, we recommend you change the wording to make it more personal.

e.g.

- *What things can parents do to encourage babies to focus on language?*

Could become

- *What things can you do to encourage your baby to focus on language?*

And

- *Have you noticed a baby who changed behaviour when curious about a sound?
What happened?*

Could become

- *Have you noticed a time when your baby changed behaviour because he or she was curious about a sound? What happened?*

And of course you may want to design questions of your own!

Suggested approach

Before showing the video

Decide on a couple of questions from the “Previous Learning” category above to put to your participants.

- Ask a first question and engage participants in a discussion. You may want to use questions like, “Have others had similar experiences?” to encourage all participants to speak.
- Depending on your time availability (3 hour session), ask a second question.

Ask participants to notice if these questions are also addressed in the video.

After showing the video

- Ask for first reactions to the video – words that come to mind? Interesting comments they recall, or something that was new to them
- Remember to refer back to your question(s) prior to watching the video and ask participants how those questions were addressed in the video

Application questions

- Then move onto the “application” questions to further discussion and provide participants with the opportunity to relate what they saw in the video to their own experiences
- Ask how participants might change their actions with infants because of the video – or suggestions they might make to new parents because of the video

Reflection questions

- Move on to “reflection” questions to encourage deeper thinking about the topic

Closure

- Depending on the time available and the group you are working with, either summarize key discussion points or ask participants to summarize some of the key discussion points and share what they will continue to do because of the content of the video or what changes they will make because of what they have learned from the video.

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DISCLAIMER

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