



KIDCARE CANADA

nurturing the best possible start

Video Specific Discussion Q & A



Born to Communicate - Chapter Two **Parents are Baby's First Teacher**

Categories of questions:



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

- *Name something that a baby experiences after birth that was not experienced in the womb.*

ANSWER: Almost everything! Although the baby has started a relationship with its mother while in the womb, the baby does not experience breathing, changes in temperature, hunger, digestion, peeing and pooping, or vivid sounds and sights until after birth. Depending on the baby, this can be stressful. The parent or caregiver's role is to try to understand from the baby's point of view and reassure the baby in a calm voice and possibly naming what might be going on for the baby.

- *Do babies like to look at faces?*

ANSWER: Yes. Babies are attracted to faces and when parents feed a baby in their arms that is the ideal distance for babies to focus on the parent's face. Sometimes new babies look more at the contrast of the hairline than into the parents eyes, but they soon learn to look into eyes.

- *Do babies recognize voices?*

ANSWER: Yes. Babies recognize the voices they have heard while in the mother's womb, especially the mother's voice and those of others who have been in close contact with the mother. Some interesting research was done when a male physician would talk to a baby and the baby's dad would talk to the baby and the baby inevitably turned to the father's voice.

- *Do even very new babies have ways of communicating?*

ANSWER: Yes: They communicate from birth through crying, yawning or turning away (when overstimulated), gurgling and through body language, such as relaxing or stiffening.

- *Do new babies respond to the emotions of those around them?*

ANSWER: Yes. This is perhaps the most relevant thing for parents to realize. Babies pick up on the emotions of those around them. Babies may cry because the parent is not feeling relaxed. If a baby has been fed, changed, has slept, etc. but still cries, they might be picking up on a parent's anxiety – or - it might just be intestinal distress! But if you worry when your baby cries, the baby might pick up your worry and cry more... creating a stressful circle.

APPLICATION

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

- *Can you recall some typical ways babies you have known let you know they are in need of something?*

ANSWER: Parents will typically mention crying! After a while parents learn to differentiate between different meanings of the types of crying. Hungry, tired, etc. can sound different. Parents learn to read their baby's cues. Overstimulated babies might sneeze, turn away, or yawn (but they may do those things for other reasons as well).

- *Is there a special way you make eye contact with a newborn?*

ANSWER: Parents may mention that they make eye contact while feeding or changing the baby when their faces are at the ideal distance. Smiling and talking to the baby while holding the baby on their knees. While reading to the baby they might stop to exchange glances.

- *How does a baby you know imitate facial expressions?*

ANSWER: Parents may say that they stick out their tongue or open their mouth wide and the baby does the same. It is not their imagination- young babies really do imitate.

- *How have you encouraged babies to develop communication skills? What did you do? How did they respond?*

ANSWER: Parents may mention turn-taking when talking to their babies (saying something and waiting for the baby to respond). They may sing, smile, read, etc. They may use special language and a melodic voice (“motherese” or “infant directed speech”) that attracts the baby.

- *What kinds of ‘conversations’ do you have with a baby? When are they most enjoyable*

ANSWER: Parents may describe many things. Once babies start to vocalise, parents often repeat the sounds the baby makes. This is a great time for turntaking.

REFLECTION

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

- *Some connections within the brain last a lifetime. What do you think this means for early interactions between parents and babies?*

ANSWER: in an ideal world parents help babies feel safe from the word go. They comfort baby, try to meet baby's needs, talk, read and sing to the baby and enjoy the baby. This helps the baby's brain develop pathways that give the baby a good start to life. It is thought that this early start creates resiliency in children. It is hard to change the early connections, but it is never too late.

- *What kind of things can parents do to encourage their baby to develop communication skills?*

ANSWER: Create a safe environment, smile, talk, explain, name things, sing, read, etc.

- *What are some ways that parents can be encouraged to make special time for communication with their babies?*

ANSWER: When parents understand how important and helpful it is for their baby, to have the close communication with the parents, parents can make times like changing, feeding etc., into special communication times, investing in the baby's future and their future relationship with their baby.

- *Why is a rich vocabulary appropriate when you are talking to a baby?*

ANSWER: The richest vocabulary is what baby overhears when parents are speaking to each other (and to siblings etc.) It is the ideal time for young Babies and toddlers to learn language. Even though they can't repeat it, they absorb the sounds, patterns, and emotions of the complex language and this will serve them later.

- *Reading and singing are great ways to interact with a baby. What do you think is happening at these times?*

ANSWER: Babies need a relationship to learn. There is a foundation for language being formed as the positive relationship of interactions like singing, etc. that takes place. The baby feels safe, comforted and relaxed as they hear the parents sing or read. When they feel safe they are ready to learn.

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 kind of things can parents do to encourage their baby to develop communication skills?*

Could become

- *What do you do to encourage your baby to develop communication skills?*

And

- *What are some ways that parents can encouraged to make special time for communication with their babies?*

Could become

- *What are some ways that you can make special time for communication with your baby?*

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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