



Crying

Babies cry because they feel distress (e.g. pain, discomfort or separation anxiety), but actually it is an expression of attachment, bonding and love. Babies physically recover from stress more quickly when you respond in a sensitive way.

Observation

1. Have you noticed that babies cry in order to convey a message? What message do they want to convey?
2. When do babies cry the most? Have you noticed a difference between crying from hunger, because of a wet or soiled nappy, out of boredom, etc.?
3. Do you see and hear a difference between younger and older babies' crying?
4. Have you noticed that babies get attached to others? How can you tell? Is there a difference between younger and older infants?
5. How do babies respond to their parents? What do you see happening?
6. Are the babies particularly attached to someone in the childcare centre? How can you tell?
7. Have you noticed that babies calm down faster if you try to interpret their signals?
8. Do babies feel more at ease if you sit with them and give them your full attention? Or do they feel just as much at ease when there are other babies present?
9. How do babies respond to their siblings?



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Activities to try

1. Sing simple children's songs together, such as 'If you're happy and you know it', 'Twinkle twinkle little star', etc.
2. How do you help a baby settle into the childcare environment? How do you get to know the baby? When the infant first starts childcare, consider the situation from the point of view of the baby and his parents.
3. Describe what is happening to the baby. Hearing about what he is experiencing will make him more aware of himself.
4. Ask the parents how they soothe their child at home. Does the baby perhaps like being carried in a particular way?
5. A baby tries to provoke a response by laughing, crying or making sounds or gestures. Observe the baby closely and try to respond to all signals.
6. Looking at a high-contrast book is very interesting for young babies. While looking, you can describe what the baby is seeing.
7. Physical contact is very important. Hold a baby on your lap, cuddle him and walk around together, even if he is not crying. A baby massage is also nice.





Recognising faces and emotions

Five-month-old babies recognise not just faces, but also facial expressions and emotions.

Observation

1. When, how and for how long do the babies in your group look at your face? Is it the same for all the infants?
2. Do the babies in your group react differently to a laughing face than they do to a serious, scared or surprised face? Describe their reaction.
3. Do babies younger than 5 months watch your face in a different way from older babies? Do they react differently to different emotions?
4. Do the babies in your group react to you differently than they do to one of your colleagues? Describe their reaction.
5. Do the babies react differently to you than they do to their parents? Describe their reaction.
6. Do babies look at one another's facial expressions? How can you tell?
7. Do babies themselves use facial expressions to express their emotions? Which ones?

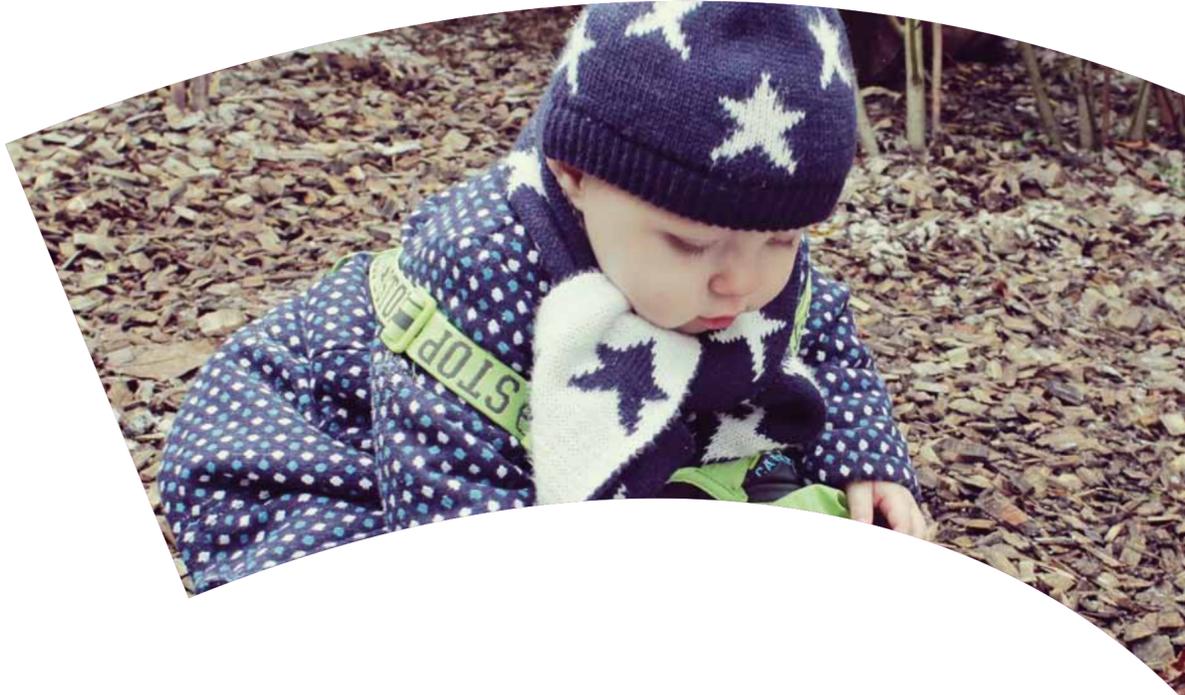


Recognising faces and emotions

Five-month-old babies recognise not just faces, but also facial expressions and emotions.

Activities to try

1. Working with a colleague, try to take photographs of how babies react to different facial expressions.
2. Sit down in front of a mirror with a baby. How does he react to his and your facial expressions reflected in the mirror?
3. Put together a photo album of different facial expressions of the babies and practitioners in the group. Look at the album with the infants. How do they react to the photos?
4. Investigate whether the effect of a particular facial expression is the same for babies of different ages.
5. Try to communicate with facial expressions at a different time from when you usually do, for instance in the relaxation room instead of on the changing mat, while feeding the babies instead of when they wake up.
6. Ask the parents how their baby reacts to facial expressions at home.



Imitating and predicting

Babies understand the purpose of objects because you use them. They imitate your behaviour and model their own actions on what they see you doing.

Observation

1. When do babies imitate your actions? Do you notice a difference between toys and other everyday objects?
2. How do babies react if you use an everyday object in a different way? Is there a difference between younger and older infants?
3. Have you ever noticed that babies can predict what you're going to pick up if you just look at it? From what age can they do this?
4. Do babies recognise standard activities such as changing a nappy? Can they predict what you're about to do?
5. Do babies expect something different from you than they do from one of your colleagues? What makes you think that?
6. Can babies predict what you're going to do if they hear a signal, for instance the phone ringing? What do they look at?
7. Do babies also look at what other babies are doing? Do they imitate one another?



Imitating and predicting

Babies understand the purpose of objects because you use them. They imitate your behaviour and model their own actions on what they see you doing.

Activities to try

1. Just using actions, see if a baby can learn what an everyday object can do. For example, type on a keyboard.
2. Give babies pots and pans, an old mobile phone, a remote control, etc. and use them together.
3. See if babies hand you an object when you try to pick up the object but can't quite reach it.
4. You probably have some toys that light up or make music. How do the babies react when you switch them off? What do they do when you switch them on again?
5. Let the babies crawl to the sleeping room themselves when it's nap time. Do they know where their own cot is?
6. Sing a song or a nursery rhyme with gestures together, such as 'If you're happy and you know it' or 'Incy wincy spider'. Do the infants join in?





Conversing through vocalisations

Babies make more sounds when you're reading a book or playing with a hand puppet with them than they do during another activity. They make other, more complex sounds when a practitioner reacts.

Observation

1. Have you noticed babies vocalising? How do they sound?
2. When do babies make sounds? Do you notice a difference when you're playing with them, feeding them, changing them, or doing something else with them?
3. What sounds do the babies in your group make? Is there a difference between younger and older infants?
4. How do you react when a baby vocalises? Do you give praise? Do you name the things you see? Do you imitate the sounds made by the baby? Do you ask questions? Do you make play noises? What do your colleagues do?
5. Do babies react to one another's vocalisations? Describe what you see and hear.
6. Do the babies make sounds when they see their parents? How do the parents react to the sounds?
7. What sounds do the babies in your group make while you're reading? Describe them.
8. What sounds do babies make when they're playing? Describe their reactions and the game they're playing.
9. Do the infants in your group speak their own language? For example, do they always make the same specific sounds for certain things like eating, drinking, sleeping or a wet or soiled nappy?



Conversing through vocalisations

Babies make more sounds when you're reading a book or playing with a hand puppet with them than they do during another activity. They make other, more complex sounds when a practitioner reacts.

Activities to try

1. Read a book with one child. At the age of about 12 months, children are not always interested in the pictures. The child is in charge of the book. Reading to him is simply talking about what's happening.
2. Give a hand puppet a voice that matches its personality and let it talk and sing with the children. This can become a daily ritual.
3. What other reactions could we have, what questions could we ask other than 'what's that?'?
4. Let the children discover new things. Engage in a conversation with them.
5. Go shopping with a few children and explore the supermarket together. This will open up new topics of conversation.
6. Intense experiences trigger intense reactions and memories. What games or activities could you make more intense?



Pointing and vocalising

At 14 months, infants point to get something: 'I want my bottle', or to share something: 'Look, a bird!'. The sounds they make while pointing change depending on the message.

Observation

1. Have you noticed that babies point and babble to convey a message? What message do they want to convey?
2. When do babies point and babble? Do you notice a difference between pointing to get something and pointing to share something?
3. Do you see and hear a difference in the pointing and babbling behaviour of younger and older infants?
4. How do babies react when you respond to them pointing? Describe their reaction. Is there a difference between younger and older infants?
5. Do babies also point at parents? How do they point at their own parents? Do they vocalise at the same time?
6. Have you lost something? Has a baby ever helped you look for it?
7. Do babies point at things in their group? What do they point at?
8. Do babies point and babble at one another?



Pointing and vocalising

At 14 months, infants point to get something: 'I want my bottle', or to share something: 'Look, a bird!'. The sounds they make while pointing change depending on the message.

Activities to try

1. Go for a walk with a few children, for instance in a cart. Tell them about everything they can see. What do they point at?
2. Make a family photo wall at the children's eye level. How do they react to the photo wall?
3. Read a book with one child. From about the age of 13 months, children start being fascinated by the pictures. Does the child point? Does he babble? Describe what he's pointing at.
4. Can children indicate (by pointing and/or babbling) what toy they want to play with? Can you make it easier for them?
5. While you're changing a baby's nappy can he look at and point to things he likes? Describe what the baby can see or what is happening at that moment.
6. Is there a window through which you can look outside with the children? What do they see? React by telling them what they can see.

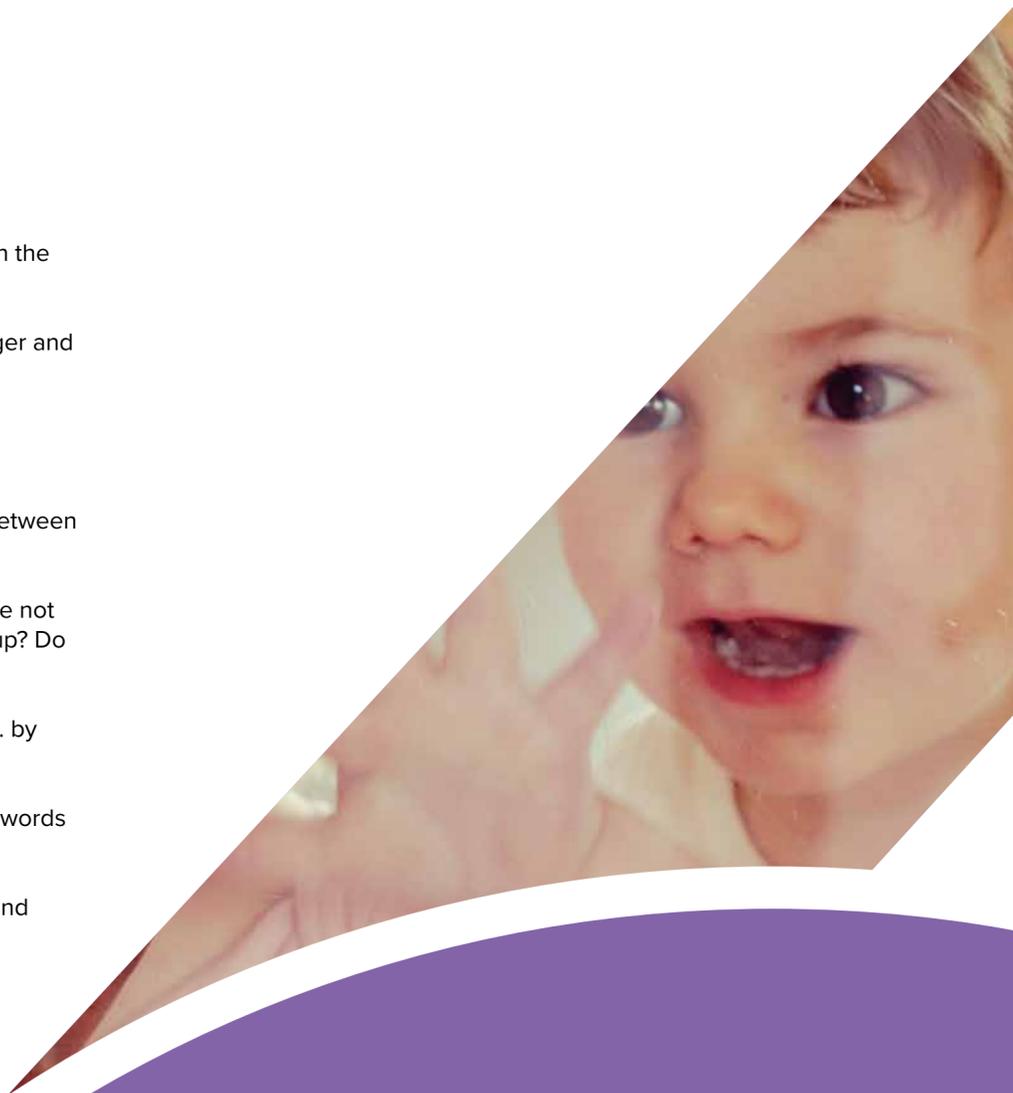


Following a gaze

Even when babies are not part of a conversation, they can obtain a wealth of information about objects, safety and social interactions by following your eye movements.

Observation

1. Have you noticed babies following your gaze? Do they do anything with the information? If so, what?
2. When do babies follow your gaze? Is there a difference between younger and older infants?
3. Have babies followed your gaze even when they were not part of a conversation or interaction?
4. How do babies react when following your gaze? Is there a difference between younger and older infants?
5. From the age of 18 months, children can also follow a gaze when they're not part of a conversation. Have you noticed this during drop-off and pick-up? Do they follow the gaze of other children's parents as well?
6. Has a child ever found out why you're angry, happy, sad, frustrated, etc. by following your gaze? What makes you think that?
7. Do babies discover objects by following your gaze? Do they learn new words or actions? Describe how they do that.
8. Do babies also follow one another's gaze? Describe how they do that and when.





Following a gaze

Even when babies are not part of a conversation, they can obtain a wealth of information about objects, safety and social interactions by following your eye movements.

Activities to try

1. While playing with children, tell them who or what you see. You don't always have to talk about objects you're holding.
2. Make sure that children can see where you're looking and can follow your gaze during mealtimes or when you're taking care of them. If something happens, briefly explain what is going on.
3. Look at the toys and the toy box while tidying up. Use your gaze to make it clear which toys should go in which box.
4. Go outside together and discover the world around them. Every season offers something of interest. Kneel down with them so that they can see where you're looking and can follow your gaze.
5. Can babies follow your gaze while you're changing their nappy? Tell them what you can see and what you're doing.
6. Make sure that toddlers frequently get the opportunity to follow the gaze of other people during drop-off and pick-up, and also when other parents are around.