

# Getting to know your baby



## The Principles of Attuned Interaction

You are	By	To develop
<p><b>Being attentive</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Looking interested</li> <li>● Turning towards</li> <li>● Friendly intonation and posture</li> <li>● Giving time and space for other</li> <li>● Wondering about what they are doing, thinking or feeling</li> </ul>	<p><b>The foundations for intersubjectivity</b></p>
<p><b>Encouraging initiatives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Waiting</li> <li>● Listening actively</li> <li>● Showing emotional warmth through intonation</li> <li>● Naming positively what you see, hear, think or feel</li> <li>● Naming what you are doing, hearing, thinking or feeling</li> <li>● Looking for initiatives</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Receiving initiatives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Showing you have heard, noticed the other's initiative</li> <li>● Receiving initiative with friendly body language</li> <li>● Returning eye contact, smiling, nodding in response</li> <li>● Receiving what the other is saying or doing with words</li> <li>● Repeating / using the other's words or phrases</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intersubjectivity</b></p>
<p><b>Developing attuned interactions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Receiving and then responding</li> <li>● Checking the other is understanding you</li> <li>● Waiting attentively for your turn</li> <li>● Giving a second (and further) turn on the same topic</li> <li>● Giving and taking short turns</li> <li>● Supporting turn-taking round a group</li> <li>● Contributing to interaction / activity equally</li> <li>● Co-operating - helping each other</li> </ul>	

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<b>Guiding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extending or building on the other's response</li> <li>● Scaffolding - judging the amount of support required and adjusting</li> <li>● Giving information when required</li> <li>● Providing help when required</li> <li>● Offering choices that they can understand</li> <li>● Making suggestions that they can follow</li> </ul>	
<b>Deepening discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Supporting goal-setting</li> <li>● Sharing viewpoints</li> <li>● Discussing collaboratively and problem-solving</li> <li>● Naming difference of opinion</li> <li>● Investigating the intentions behind words</li> <li>● Naming contradictions / conflicts (real or potential)</li> <li>● Reaching new shared understandings</li> <li>● Managing conflict (back to being attentive and receiving initiatives with the aim of restoring attuned interactions)</li> </ul>	<b>Mediated learning</b>

## Observing Interaction

1. What sleep / wake state was the baby in?
2. Was this interaction too much, too little or just right for the baby at this time?
3. How would you describe the baby's experience? If you were the baby how would you feel?
4. Did the adult give space and time to encourage the baby's initiative?
5. Was there eye contact between them? Too much, too little or just right?
6. Did the baby become overwhelmed? Was he able to look away and come back in his own time (rupture and repair)?
7. How was the adult able to help the baby regulate his emotions?
8. How did the baby respond to the touch? Notice if the parent kissed the baby and how the baby responded.
9. What voice tones were used by adult and baby? Was there reciprocity (turn-taking)?
10. What was the baby's posture and muscle tone like?
11. Were the mother and baby well positioned for play?
12. What do you imagine the mother might be feeling?
13. Check your observation against the attunement principles. How many apply?
14. Can you pick one authentic attuned moment that you can build upon? (see reverse)
15. How did watching the interaction make you feel?

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## Baby Watching: Making sense of your baby

People often say they wish their baby had come with an instruction manual but it is worth taking time, just a few minutes when you can, to watch closely and gradually become familiar with what your baby is like.

Getting to know their sleep and wake states will help you. If you are pregnant now, baby watch when you are out and about to what sleep or wake state babies are in.

Young babies often move quickly from sleep to wake states - notice your own baby's pattern and think how they may feel in each state.

### Deep Sleep: In a deep sleep your baby will:

- Lie still with eyes closed
- Breathe steadily and regularly
- Be hard to wake up
- Sometimes make jerky or sicking movements

What's it like to be in a deep sleep? Babies in deep sleep need rest and a comfortable and, if possible, familiar place to sleep.

### Light Sleep: In a light sleep your baby will:

- Have their eyelids closed but they may flutter
- Make rapid eye movements under the lids
- Make sucking or face movements
- Wake more easily
- May make a sleep smile

Think how you might want to be treated in this state. Babies need time to wake or drop into deep sleep.

### Drowsy: In a drowsy state your baby will:

- Have heavy-lidded eyes which may flutter or look glazed
- Make smooth body movements but may startle suddenly

Think how you feel in a drowsy state, just before waking. Your baby may enjoy a cuddle while they wake or they may want to fall back to sleep.

Find out more at: [www.your-baby.org.uk/baby-states/introduction-sleep-and-wake-states](http://www.your-baby.org.uk/baby-states/introduction-sleep-and-wake-states)



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## Baby Watching: Making sense of your baby

**Quiet Alert:** In a quiet alert state your baby is ready for interaction and will:

- Be wide-eyed with a bright face and still body
- Be interested in your face and voice
- Focus and be interested in what is going on

This is the best time to play and interact with your baby. In the quiet alert state your baby may like to take some time to watch before engaging. Give lots of time and watch for baby's cues.

**Unsettled / active alert:** In the unsettled / active alert state your baby may:

- Fuss and be unsettled
- Move, wriggle and squirm a lot
- Make thrashing movements with arms and legs
- Be especially sensitive to loud noises and light

Think how you feel when you are unsettled. Baby is likely to need a change of pace. They may need a feed or just to slow down because it is all too much.

**Crying:** In the crying state your baby may:

- Cry intensively and be difficult to comfort
- Change colour and yell

Babies cry for many reasons. Although it can be difficult to be on the receiving end of crying, your baby is not crying to 'get at you'. It is how the baby is trying to help you work out what is going on for them.

They may be tired, hungry, thirsty, too hot or too cold, bored, scared, lonely or ill. Soon you will be able to tell one cry from another and this helps you know what to do.

Think how your baby likes to sooth. Do they have a favourite cuddling position?

[www.your-baby.org.uk/sleeping-and-soothing](http://www.your-baby.org.uk/sleeping-and-soothing)



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## Getting to know one another (1)

Getting to know your new baby takes time and by watching their signals and cues you can begin to work out what it is they like, what they don't like and what they need.

### What are baby cues?

Baby's reaction may look random but every movement may be a cue or communication. For example, squirming or pulling away may be a sign he doesn't like having his face wiped. He may be still, quiet and watch intently if something interests him.

Babies can't think like older children, but they do experience strong feelings and bodily sensations. They are very sensitive to their environment, the people around them, the sounds, smells and emotions in the room. Just think about the urgency in a newborn baby's hunger cry. It can feel as if his world is falling apart. As baby gets older he will feel safer because he knows his needs will be met and then he will be able to wait for a short time.

### Taking some time to just watch and wonder

The key to understanding baby's language is taking the time to watch. In the busy rush of everyday life it is easy to miss baby's subtle cues.

Every now and again take a little time to just watch your baby's behaviour and wonder what is going on for him.

What might he be feeling behind the behaviour that you can see? Babies are learning all the time and love hearing your voice, so wonder out loud! Sharing your thoughts out loud by saying things like "I am just wondering if you are hungry or need an extra cuddle?" will convey the feeling to baby that you are trying to work it out

### Use the sleep wake / states to give you confidence

Knowing what sleep or wake state your baby is in will really help you puzzle out what he needs. You will notice he can only do things when he is in the 'right' state. So, for example, he won't want to feed when he is in the drowsy state, and he won't want to play when he is crying. He will only want to smile and coo when he is in the quiet alert state.

### Born ready to connect

We are all born to relate to one another and right from birth baby will be able to recognise your voice and he will enjoy fleetingly looking at your face and, after a few weeks, he will gaze for longer.





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## Getting to know one another (1)

Parents and babies can't be connected all the time, though. That would be overwhelming for baby and exhausting for you. Baby will connect for a short time - then need to look away. Give him time to engage again when he is ready. Being connected is not all about face-to-face interaction, though. Touch and movement are important and being held close helps baby feel safe.

### Getting the pace right

Every baby is different and each day baby will have his own pattern and will move through the sleep and wake states many times. Watching baby's cues and signals will help you to get the pace right so you can meet his needs more easily. This does take time, though - it doesn't all happen straightaway, and some babies do cry a lot at first.



## Getting to know one another (2)

Start by thinking about what sleep / wake state your baby is in. Then take another few seconds and think about the following questions.

### Is this interaction too little for my baby at this time?

Some babies may make fewer demands and may need more attention and take time to engage in play.

- Watch your baby carefully and notice what special things he likes
- Give lots of cuddles and notice if he has a favourite cuddling position
- Talk to him slowly and warmly and make eye contact, watch and notice his responses
- Don't rush him, give him your warmth and attention while he discovers things for himself
- Try singing along with music or learn some nursery rhymes and watch his reaction
- At first he will enjoy just being close to you and having some time to watch your face
- When he is a few months old he will enjoy sitting on your knee and looking at a picture book with you

Think how you are feeling. It's harder to engage in fun interactions if you are feeling low. Don't try and battle on your own. Tell your doctor or health visitor.

### Is this interaction too much for my baby at this time?

Babies naturally move from having fun to finding it all too much. Watch for signs:

- Baby may look away for a time. Hold him so he can look away when he wants. Give him time to look away - he will either come back to look again or may move to a different sleep / wake state
- Don't be disappointed if he looks away - it is the way babies manage their emotional arousal
- When it is all too much, babies sometimes sneeze, yawn, hiccup, bring up a little milk, their skin tone pales or deepens because they need to change state.

Some babies get overwhelmed quickly, so slow the pace, watch and wait for baby's cues before responding.

## Getting to know one another (2)

### Is this interaction just right for my baby at this time?

Babies feel safe by being against your body, feeling your warmth and hearing your heartbeat and gently voice. When baby is in the quiet alert state:

- Find a comfortable position for you both and give him time and enough space to gaze at your face. The distance from your face to your lap is usually perfect!
- Wait until baby looks interested then speak slowly and warmly
- Take a very short turn and watch and wait for your baby's response - at first he will watch and when he is a few weeks old he will vocalise back while you watch and wait.
- Baby will become skilled at conversational turn-taking - learning a very important skill about how we take turns in conversation. So give him lots of time.
- Don't feel disappointed when baby needs to look away - it is one way he can manage his emotional arousal. Give time for baby to look again when they are ready. Talk to your health visitor about interactions with your baby.