

101 Ways to Raise a Happy Baby

by Lisa McCourt

Dedicated with love to Bettye McCourt,
who had her own unique ways of making me feel
like the most special little girl in the world.

--L.M.

With buckets of thanks to Greg, Cheryl, Abby and Reyna.

There would have been something darkly ironic about making my baby unhappy so I could write a book about happy babies. But thanks to the above four angels Tuck enjoyed loving companionship during the hours that I spent banging away at this thing, allowing me to be a mommy and a writer simultaneously without compromising little Mr. #1.

Introduction:

Your baby is so lucky! Of all the childcare books available, you have chosen the one that promises to help you raise a HAPPY baby. It was a selfless act, born out of love for that precious new bundle of potentiality that is your child. For the sake of his happiness, you skipped over the books that promised an easy baby, a smarter baby, a confident baby destined for grand achievements, a baby who makes life convenient for his parents...But guess what! Your selflessness has already been rewarded because raising a happy baby is the best way to get one who's all of those good things.

And raising a truly happy baby is not hard or complicated! It requires only that you strip away the extraneous layers of misinformation you have been bombarded with throughout your lifetime so that your own true primal parenting instincts can surface. You already know what your baby needs. You already possess the equipment necessary to communicate with your baby. This book will show you how to get in touch with that amazingly intuitive part of yourself!

I work in children's book publishing and since kids are my business I've always made a point of learning as much about them as I could. While waiting for my son Tucker to be born, I became fanatical about reading every baby-care book and article I could get my hands on. But instead of being comforted by the plethora of information I was accumulating, I found myself utterly distraught and confused. How could

best-selling authors and top experts in the field of childrearing be so diametrically opposed on so many crucial issues? It didn't take long to figure out the terrifying truth--*no one really had the answers!*

And why should they? Raising a baby is not a quantifiable science, with laws that can be applied across the board or results that can be easily measured with statistics. It's an awe-inspiring, unpredictable, natural, specieswide event! The reason our current cultural biases are so conflicted and messed up is this: Raising a baby is not an American experience, or a 20th or 21st century experience. It's a *human* experience, period. Aside from eating and pooping, it's the most unifying of all human experiences. Why do we as a culture keep applying complicated childrearing regimens that are as transient as hemlines to an activity that lies at the very fundamental core of humanity? It became increasingly obvious during my investigation that to raise a naturally happy human, parents need only learn how to trust in their babies and in their own human instincts.

During Tucker's first year and a half I added to my treasure-trove of research by joining countless mommy organizations and befriending, observing, and grilling a ton of mommies with regard to their parenting practices. The result is here—a collection of tried-and-true happy-baby insights from real moms with a generous sprinkling of quotes from those experts in the field whose concerns are focused where they ought to be—on the true needs of the babies.

My best teacher, of course, has been Tucker. His sweet little face is so expressive that he leaves no doubt in my mind ever as to whether I'm doing the mommy-thing right or not. When I'm not, he graciously offers me the chance to correct my course, and then rewards me with the "That's right! You're getting it!" look. Many pages in this book were written by reaching around him to my laptop while he slept blissfully on my chest in his sling.

Keep in mind while you read: Every single baby is completely unique and different from every other baby. When I talk about babies here, I'm talking about the vast majority of babies I have encountered and read about. If what I'm saying does not seem to apply to your baby, LISTEN TO YOUR BABY. Some of my best friends have raised wonderful children by means that contradict many of these Ways. They knew what was right for their specific babies and they delivered it.

Your baby will teach you how to take care of him. He's smarter about this being-human-business than you are because he comes to you with only his humanness, whereas you yourself have your humanness buried beneath layers and layers of stupid stuff that make up our society's here-today-gone-tomorrow views on childrearing. Don't subscribe to trendy information when doing something as monumental and timeless as raising your baby. Look inside, trust your heart, and read on!

1. Get attached!

A happy baby is a bonded baby. It sounds kind of abstract, this bonding thing—almost like a phenomenon to be believed in or not. And there’s certainly no guarantee that you will pop out a baby for whom you will instantly be willing to lay down your life. In fact, the big love—I mean the big, big, love that gives you goosebumps and makes your eyes well up and your breath catch in your throat—doesn’t always happen in the first few days or even weeks. For some parents it does, but for many others, true, intense bonding takes time.

Bonding is falling in love--and just like in adult love, it deepens with every tender moment of shared contact, every sweet whispered word, every adoring gaze. Quite simply, the more time baby spends in your affectionate embrace, the more bonded he will become, the more bonded YOU will become, and the more relaxed and happy you both will feel.

When I researched the experts’ advice on baby care I found that one style of parenting stood out above all the others in facilitating bonding, and therefore, in promoting happiness in babies. Dr. William Sears (far and away my favorite expert) calls it “attachment parenting” and I’m going to borrow his phrase for this parenting plan, which is really not a plan at all. It’s simply the perfect way that the human animal happily raises its offspring when left to its own innate wisdom.

The most important thing you can do to raise a happy baby is listen to him and fully believe that you instinctively understand what's best for him! Your most basic instincts are in perfect sync with your baby's basic instincts. Your baby is born knowing that you should hold, caress, and love him and go out of your way to meet all of his needs. Your instincts are to do all of these things. The only obstacle that fouls everything up is the barrage of modern advice we've all been bombarded with.

Unfortunately, lots of people have devised theories with regard to how babies should be treated. And American moms are left without any tradition to fall back on, because every few years the experts change and so do the dictates. How are we to ever trust our instincts with this steady flow of heavy-handed and forever-changing advice? The truth is that there is not a book in the world that you can buy that will tell you the correct way to raise your particular baby. You alone are meant to work out that one-of-a-kind puzzle and only one person has the answer key—your baby! The whole trick is to *know* your baby so that *your baby* can teach you how to raise him happily.

And that is where attachment parenting comes in since its basic tenets are the building blocks of the big BOND. Attached parents respond immediately to their babies' cues, wear their babies, breastfeed, and sleep with their babies. Though it is possible to bond with your child without subscribing to all of these practices, they do provide the optimum setting for bonding and promoting happiness.

For a human being of any age to be happy, he has to feel a sense of his own goodness and rightness in his environment. He needs a strong sense of self-esteem and he needs to feel understood and valued. Happy babies communicate their needs easily because they are strongly bonded to their parents, and that bond is what this book is all about.

2. How will you feed your baby? Do the research!

With so much to gain by breastfeeding, it is surprising that the majority of American mothers still end up bottlefeeding their babies. If you are pregnant and planning to bottlefeed, you owe it to yourself and your baby to do as much research as you can on the benefits of breastfeeding before making your final choice.

If you begin breastfeeding and later change your mind, a switch to bottlefeeding is easy. But if you begin by bottlefeeding and miss your chance to establish lactation, all other options will be irrevocably closed off to you. I have one friend who was told by hospital nurses that her baby “preferred the bottle.” She wanted the best for her baby so she gave up breastfeeding and has painfully regretted her decision ever since.

Sometimes a new mother feels pressure from family matriarchs who bottlefed their babies to do as they did. These older women were being the best mothers they could be according to the false information they were given at the time. Explain to them that much more is known today about the tremendous edge breastfeeding has over bottlefeeding. If

they refuse to acknowledge what has become common fact, perhaps they feel guilt over their own decisions.

Many women who bottlefeed their babies claim that they had wanted to breastfeed but were unable to for various reasons. But according to M. Sara Rosenthal, author of *The Pregnancy Sourcebook*, “It is crucial to note that only about one percent of all mothers are biologically incapable of producing enough breast milk for their newborns.” More likely, these women had very common breastfeeding difficulties and they would have succeeded with a little perseverance.

Penelope Leach writes in *Your Baby and Child*, “Almost all women, including many who try to nurse but succumb to painful breast problems or the tyranny of the baby scales, would have been able to breastfeed if they had had enough self-confidence, support from partners and others (especially mothers) and skilled, sensitive professional help on demand.”

If you want to breastfeed, rest assured that you *will* be able to. Attend La Leche League meetings while you are pregnant and buy or borrow a copy of *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*. There are scads of other good books about nursing, too, and your hospital probably offers a breastfeeding class you can take before you deliver. Pack the numbers of La Leche League leaders and lactation consultants in your hospital bag so that you can get whatever help you need right away. Be emphatically clear with all hospital staff that you intend to nurse your child and

absolutely no bottles are to be given.

3. Go to La Leche League meetings.

I want to dispel the La Leche League myth. I don't know how this came to be but it seems that when many otherwise well-informed people hear the words La Leche League they picture a coven of half-naked gypsies sitting around feeding their eight-year-olds with their breasts while discussing natural resource conservation and munching on tofu squares. In the colorful mind of my friend Kenny, these "militant boob-pushers" hypnotize new moms to initiate them into the cult, and then force them into years of breastfeeding slavery.

Kenny, dear, it just isn't so. The women I've encountered through La Leche League have been fun, intelligent, sophisticated women who happen to nurse their babies. They offer invaluable insights to one another at the monthly meetings and the leaders have the answers to absolutely any breastfeeding question. Pregnant women are welcome as well as those undecided about nursing, and contrary to popular belief, moms who are leaning toward the bottle are not tarred and feathered upon entry. To find the league leaders and meetings nearest you, call (800) 525-3243.

Once you have the number for your local leaders, you can call them anytime, with any question, even if you've never attended a meeting. These amazing women volunteer for this job. No one pays them;

they just truly want to help you nurse your baby. When Tucker was born I had the numbers of three of them so I wouldn't have to bother any one too frequently, and I was never rushed off the phone by any of them--no matter how inane my question.

Take advantage of this very valuable FREE resource!

4. Feed your baby's body and soul.

Your baby is born with a limited vocabulary, and you too have a limited vocabulary with which to truly communicate with him. Your very most affective communication tools are those two now-mountainous orbs of flesh on your chest. Whatever your relationship with them has been in the past, it's time to re-negotiate the contract. This is what they've been waiting for all your life!

Unless you've been stuck in a time-warped black hole, you know that breastfeeding is the healthiest thing you can do for your baby. But it is also one of the best ways to have a *happy* baby. Your baby won't enter this world with a lot of hobbies--nursing will be his first and most pressing desire. Nursing is every bit as psychologically nourishing as it is physically nourishing. When you put your baby to your breast, you are communicating the message, "I'm your mommy. I'm here. I want to meet your needs."

But maybe you are one of those women to whom the mere idea of some little creature suckling at your breast is completely distasteful.

Many of my nursing friends felt that way before meeting their babies. My suggestion is: just try it! If you give it a fair chance and truly hate it, stop. Happy babies do not coexist with unhappy, resentful mommies.

But keep in mind that your first nursing experiences are going to be your worst and the longer you do it the more you'll like it. It's true that breastfeeding is extremely time-consuming for the first few weeks, but is that really so bad? What a great excuse to spend lots of time relaxing with your baby and delegating everything else that needs to get done! After the first month, the whole procedure becomes tremendously less draining (no pun intended) and more rewarding, and it *does* keep getting better and easier after that.

And maybe you'll like it more than you think. Breastfeeding isn't the total give-a-thon those smug self-sacrificing mommies want it to look like. There are plenty of selfish-mommy reasons to give it a try. The most obvious one is that you don't have to buy and measure and prepare and tote around stinky old formula that stains the Baby Gaps and makes the diapers and spit-up smell and look all cottage-cheesy-awful. (Breastfed babies' poops don't smell! Honest!)

Plus, there's the seldom-discussed calorie-sucker benefit. Breastfeeding moms are so proud of their unselfishness that they rarely let outsiders in on the big secret: breastfeeding babies are convenient little tapeworms who suck the calories out of you so you can dwindle back

into your pre-pregnancy shape faster than your size-larger clothes go out of style.

If that's not enough to convince you, think about how much money you'll save, how women who breastfeed have lower incidence of breast cancer, and how much healthier breastfed babies are, resulting in less discomfort for baby, fewer trips to the doctor and fewer medical bills.

Breastfeeding makes baby happy for the mere pleasure of enjoying his naturally favorite activity; for the closeness and skin contact he gets with you; for the bonding-facilitating hormones that are released in both you and baby; and even for the taste of it. Try a little taste of your expressed breast milk (sweet!) and then formula (nasty!) and you will understand baby's preference.

In the early months, when baby truly loves so little else, watching your newborn angel nurse is as good as it gets. The feel of that sweet breath and that unbelievably soft cheek against your skin, the sound of gentle sucking, and that tiny, trusting hand patting you lovingly...this is the stuff mothering memories are made of.

5. Bottle-feed with warm, loving contact.

If you do your research and make the decision that bottlefeeding is the only acceptable course for you, resolve to be happy about it! Once you have passed the point where it would be possible for you to establish lactation, skip over sections in this or any other book that extol the

virtues of breastfeeding and make sure you don't start driving yourself crazy with guilt or remorse. Your baby needs you to be happily confident in your care for him, and studies have proven that lots of loving contact is more important for baby's psychological wellbeing than nursing is.

Once an irreversible decision has been made, don't be intimidated by mommy-snobbies who question this aspect of your mothering. You don't owe anyone excuses. Borrow my friend Jennifer's response to any impolite inquiries into her daughter's nourishment. With a big smile and a tone of voice that clearly puts an end to the conversation, she says, "Yes, Lindsay's bottlefed and she's just fine."

While it is true that breastfeeding facilitates bonding, you can do a lot to replicate the breastfeeding experience for your baby while you give him a bottle. If you're at home, try partially undressing yourself and the baby for optimum skin-to-skin touch. Position the bottle close to your breast and maintain loving eye contact with baby while he sucks. Caress and kiss and cuddle him in a soothing, non-stimulating manner.

Dr. Sears suggests, "You want your baby to feel that the bottle is part of you. Most babies, breastfed and bottlefed, feed better if you are quiet while they suck, but babies enjoy social interaction during pauses in the feedings. Watch your baby for signals that he wants to socialize during the feeding. Eventually you will develop an intuitive sense of your baby's feeding rhythm. Baby should feel that a person is feeding him, not just a bottle."

Other tips he offers bottlefeeding moms include feeding baby on request instead of by a strict schedule, being responsive to baby's signals and never forcing baby to finish a bottle if he shows signs that he's full.

6. Pick him up!

There has, in recent decades, been a strangely prevalent notion in our country that letting a baby cry alone is somehow good for the baby. No other society, primitive or contemporary, that is not influenced by Western culture shares this unnatural opinion.

In fact, in most other societies, there is a transition phase that is recognized during which mother-baby contact is essential. It is believed that nine months inside the womb and nine months of intensive mothering outside the womb are required to prepare a human infant adequately to spend any time alone.

The necessary components of the second-nine-month-transition phase are close mother-baby contact, responding promptly to crying, and breastfeeding until at least the age of two. As radical as that sounds, it is all just commonplace mothering outside of our culture. Anthropologists repeatedly report that one of the most striking differences between babies in the Western world and babies in the pre-literate world is that in the latter, babies seldom cry, and if they do, they are usually picked up immediately and nursed or soothed in some other way.

Many experts are now telling us what we mothers have always

known in our hearts. Babies should not cry alone. According to renowned child-care expert Lee Salk, picking up a baby when he cries teaches him that someone responds to his needs, whether those needs are for food or merely for the physical sensation of being held. He tells parents, “There is no harm in a child crying; the harm is done if his cries are not answered.”

Most parents will try to determine the reason for baby’s crying so they can fix it. But the danger is that very often, there will be no apparent reason, and that is perfectly normal and appropriate. Babies just feel bad sometimes and long for human contact and love. If parents comfort baby when they believe she has a reason for crying, but ignore her when they believe she does not have a legitimate reason, they will be teaching her that people are not to be trusted. She will feel confused and powerless and not worth their attention.

Crying is the only way a baby can communicate! When cries go unanswered often enough, the baby will come to think of herself an ineffective communicator. Once that belief is established in infancy, it is likely to become fulfilled in later childhood.

In nature, almost all mammal mothers respond immediately to their babies’ cries. The mothers nurse, lick, or touch the infants as an automatic response to any discomfort they sense in their offspring. Even human children, when left to their own instincts, will rush to help a crying baby. Don’t let the lousy advice of some recent “experts” get in the

way of your own completely appropriate biological imperative to pick up and nurture your child.

7. Ditch the schedule.

In Buddhism, there is a maxim that describes one aspect of perfect Buddha nature. It says, “Eat when hungry; sleep when tired.” How simple that is, and yet how complicated we make life for our babies when we try to rob them of this most natural human right. Babies are not meant to follow schedules. Their tremendous rate of growth is far from steady in the first eighteen months—it surges in unpredictable spurts. That means that babies’ needs for food and for rest are extremely variable. The only way to make sure they get the right amount of both is to tune into babies’ cues and trust them to call the shots.

If a baby is fed (breast or bottle) according to a schedule, instead of being fed when she cries to alert her caregiver that she’s hungry, she will assimilate the information that her hunger cues are wrong, and she’ll come to distrust them. Similarly, if a parent forces a rigid sleeping schedule on a baby, the baby will learn to disregard her natural feelings of tiredness. Causing a baby to distrust her own internal impulses is doing her a terrible disservice.

If babies are allowed to follow their natural desires to eat when they’re hungry and stop when they’re full, those patterns will become second nature to them and they’ll be much less likely to develop eating

disorders later in life. And if baby is encouraged to sleep only when he's tired, he'll sleep better and be less likely to develop sleep disturbances.

Some experts advise schedules for babies because they think doing so will make them popular with parents who are looking for shortcuts. A scheduled baby would seem to be an easy baby. But when you take into account all of the tears and frustrations (both babies' and parents') that are spent in trying to bend baby's will to make him conform to the arbitrary schedule, you find that a much easier route is to just listen to baby and respond to his needs.

In Japan, as well as in most traditional cultures, there is no concept of bedtimes for babies. The babies remain with the parents until they are sleepy, then fall asleep wherever they are. There is no crying, no struggle, no abandonment. When the parents themselves are ready to go to bed, they pick up their sleeping children and take them to bed with them. Sleep problems are almost non-existent in Japanese children.

Without the painful separation from their parents to overcome, these babies don't suck their thumbs to self-soothe; they don't become attached to transitional objects like teddy bears or blankets; they don't make their parents get up repeatedly throughout the night.

Of course, schedules are only bad when they're imposed on a baby. Many babies fall into amazingly regular schedules on their own. If that's the case with your baby, enjoy the predictability, but don't be surprised if she revises the plan from time to time.

8. Start making your baby happy while you are still pregnant.

Amazingly, research indicates that your stress level while you are pregnant may contribute to your baby's general level of stress. T. Berry Brazelton conducted a study comparing the lifestyles of three different groups of Japanese women while they were pregnant, and then comparing the attributes of their newborn babies. The pregnant women who lived a relaxed, country lifestyle on the Goto Islands had babies who were notably calmer and had longer attention spans than the babies of the women who lived in Tokyo, who lived a much more fast-paced, urban lifestyle. The third group, the Japanese women living in San Francisco, had the most frantic lifestyles of all, and correspondingly, their babies were the jumpiest, most agitated, and had the shortest attention spans.

Don Campbell, writes in *The Mozart Effect*, "I believe a mother's strong emotions--from anger and resentment to deep calm, gratitude, and acceptance—can create hormonal changes and neurological impulses that affect the fetus. In many traditional societies, it has long been recognized that all the influences to which the growing baby is exposed contribute to its health and wellbeing. In Japan, *Tai-kyo*, or embryonic education, was, until the early part of the twentieth century, a part of how families prepared for newborns. The voices, thoughts, and feelings of the mother and father, grandparents, and other family members were believed to influence the fetus, and disharmonious

vibrations of all kinds were avoided. Today that would include blaring television sets, violent films, loud music, and other sounds that might upset a growing baby.”

In his amazing book, *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*, Dr. Thomas Verny describes how Boris Brott, the conductor of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra in Ontario, was puzzled by a mysterious ability to play certain pieces brilliantly by ear, while he struggled to master all other pieces. The answer came when he learned that his mother had played those selections that came so effortlessly to him while she was pregnant. Embryologists agree that the ear is the first organ to develop in embryo, becoming functional after just eighteen weeks and becoming capable of active listening from twenty-four weeks on.

Researchers now know that an unborn baby is sensitive not only to music but also to the emotion in his mother’s voice and possibly even the meaning of her words. In a landmark study at the University of North Carolina, Dr. Tony DeCasper and Dr. Melanie Spence instructed pregnant women to read Dr. Seuss’s *The Cat in the Hat* to their bellies during the third trimester of their pregnancies. The newborn babies demonstrated through sucking tests that they could recognize verses from the book and distinguish them from other reading material!

Take advantage of this remarkable opportunity to get a head-start on bonding! Pay attention to what your baby hears while you are pregnant. Make up songs just for the baby and sing them lovingly when

you're alone in the house or car. Don't feel silly. Even if you don't believe your baby understands what you're singing, doing it will get you in a great frame of mind for bonding with your little guest when he arrives. And give Dad and other friends and relatives a chance, too!

9. Rock-a-bye your baby.

Rocking is a natural response all over the world for parents comforting their babies. Babies like it so much because it reminds them of the womb experience. We spontaneously rock babies at around 60 to 70 rocks per minute. This is the rate at which mothers typically walked in the last stages of pregnancy, and it's also the average heart rate of a resting adult. Without consciously knowing why, we choose that rate because our instincts tell us it will comfort baby.

Babies need movement. Those who aren't carried or rocked enough will flail their limbs and clench and unclench their fists, trying to provide a little motion for themselves. With or without an official rocking chair, rocking babies helps them to develop a sense of balance, which is the first step to learning body control.

Don't depend on a cradle! To get the full benefits of rocking, babies need to be held upright. Studies have shown that most parents instinctively hold babies with their left arms, on the left sides of their bodies. We do it simply because our instincts tell us that babies prefer that side, and in fact, they do. Baby can feel your heartbeat there; your

left arm is warmer than your right since it's closer to your heart; and having baby's right side pressed against you actually helps his digestive functioning!

And since the left side of the body is controlled by the right side of the brain (the emotional side), it has even been speculated that the left side of the face is more expressive than the right. By holding babies in the way that feels most natural to us, we are actually showing babies our more loving and tender side, and perhaps our left eye and ear are even more receptive to baby's emotional cues!

Mothering magazine cites a study that demonstrated how rocking baby in a rocking chair even helped mothers get over C-sections. The group that rocked had less pain, less intestinal gas, got up sooner and left the hospital sooner. And even those who gave birth vaginally found that rocking relaxed their abdominal muscles while promoting better digestion, appetite and blood circulation.

Why resist doing anything that feels so good to baby and so good to Mommy, too? I love this beautiful description from *Mothering*: "When babies sleep, they snuggle tight into your shoulder. Their warm, milky scent tickles your nose, the ultimate aromatherapy. Tension is pulled from your body like the moon pulls the tides out to sea—naturally, inexorably. The motion of the rocking chair offers a comforting solution to all the day's problems. A soothing touch by another person, in fact, has been shown to slow the human heartbeat. Swaying back and forth

with your tiny tranquilizer erases everything but the satisfaction of the moment.”

Race you to the rocker!

10. Don't be a closet-nurser.

Breastfeeding in public is more accepted than it has ever been, but we still have a long way to go! Help the cause by proudly feeding your baby whenever and wherever necessary. It is utterly ridiculous that mothers in our society should be made to feel ashamed or embarrassed for doing the most natural and loving thing we humans are equipped to do. Baby will be happiest if he's given the opportunity to nurse as his needs arise as long as he senses that Mom is happy and comfortable meeting those needs.

Once you've gotten the hang of breastfeeding at home, sit in front of a mirror and practice more discreet positions for your public debut. Then take your show on the road! When you're confident with public breastfeeding, you can literally go anywhere with your precious parcel, making life-with-baby much more closely resemble life-before-baby.

One of the best resources I've discovered for shy-about-nursing moms is Motherwear catalog. (Call 800-950-2500 to get one.) You can order attractive clothes with discreet nursing openings that make it incredibly easy to feed your baby anywhere without anyone peeping at so much as a centimeter of your breast.

One warning: while their shirts run pretty true to size, their dresses run really, really big (probably to make us new moms feel better.) I'm normally a solid size six but I have to order dresses from Motherwear in extra-small and then have them taken in. Thankfully, they have the most liberal return policy in the world, encouraging you to exchange clothes you've worn and even washed if you decide you ordered the wrong size. The clothes are a little pricey, but they're made of heavy-duty cotton for lots of washings, and the patterns are especially designed to camouflage spit-up and baby-drool spots. It's worth the investment to build a small wardrobe of staples from this catalog because as easy as it is to just lift a shirt up, there are some circumstances that call for an almost-invisible way to nurse.

11. Use all of your heightened senses to bond with baby.

Studies have shown that newborn babies can identify their mothers by smell! When researchers placed a breastpad damp with a mother's milk on one side of her newborn's head, and another woman's milk on the other side, the babies turned toward their own mother's milk 80% of the time. And while you may not believe it, you have similar amazing abilities! After just a few days, most mothers can identify *by smell* clothing worn by their own babies from clothing worn by other babies.

Even more remarkable is how quickly our sense of touch can bond us to our babies. About 70 % of blindfolded mothers who spent at least an hour with their infants following birth are able to pick their babies out of a lineup just by the feel of their hands or cheeks. Dads are amazingly good at this too!

T. Berry Brazelton shows mothers how important they are to their infants by demonstrating that babies know and prefer their mothers' voices. He asks the mom to softly say baby's name in one ear while he does the same in the baby's other ear. Without fail, the babies turn toward their mothers. Similarly, mothers can usually distinguish their own babies' cries from that of other babies of the same age.

Numerous studies have been done which show that, when given a choice, babies will choose to look at a human face over any other image. And by just two days old, infants will choose their mother's face over any other. Though still legally blind, they are programmed to focus on an image approximately eight to twelve inches in front of them—the precise distance between a mother and her nursing infant. And no one has to remind a new parent how mesmerizing it is to gaze into the face of his or her own newborn child.

So, while you're getting to know your scrumptious new charge, keep in mind that all of your senses are heightened by the human miracle you have just taken part in. Nature has given you a temporary, magical gift—use it to bond with your baby in every possible way.

12. Recognize the limitations of your pediatrician.

Your baby's pediatrician is a highly trained *medical* professional. But when it comes to parenting issues, she is just another parent, if, in fact she even is a parent. Questions like, "Where should my baby sleep?" and "How much should I hold my baby?" and "How long should I let my baby cry?" are not medical questions, so your pediatrician's answer to them should hold no more weight than your dry cleaner's answer to them.

Most doctors hate those questions, and the most professional answer they can give you is something to the effect of, "Whatever works best for your family is fine with me. I will support your parenting decisions as long as they don't conflict with your child's medical needs." When doctors give more specific advice than this, be fully aware that you are being offered an *opinion* that has nothing at all to do with pediatric credentials.

That said, there's nothing wrong with interviewing pediatricians to find one who supports your parenting philosophies. It's hard not to view each well-visit as a report card on your mothering, though we all know we're not supposed to feel that way. I personally love being praised for my parenting choices by Tucker's pediatrician (who was selected, in part, because I knew he was an attachment-parenting advocate!)

Whatever you do, don't let parenting advice from a doctor or anyone else override your own maternal instincts. When wrestling with any parenting dilemma, the most important two entities to consult are your own heart and your own baby.

13. Keep baby close.

Unfortunately, ours is a culture that routinely separates mothers and babies for much of the time. We leave babies in plastic carriers, strollers, playpens, or at day care centers and even when we are at home with our babies and could be touching them, we are sometimes advised to let babies cry and suffer alone.

This lifestyle places a tremendous amount of stress on babies, but luckily, the tide is turning and much evidence is surfacing to make regular baby-holding the norm. Remember how breastfeeding in our country was on the brink of extinction until the 1960s when enough research finally proved that Mother Nature had the superior recipe? It's hard to imagine that we believed the formula manufacturers who tried to convince us otherwise! Similarly, sufficient research has now finally proven that giving babies enough touch is as necessary as giving them enough food.

Australian psychoanalyst Dr. Peter Cook writes, "I suggest that childrearing in English speaking societies is emerging from an era in which many widely held beliefs, values, attitudes and practices have

been so out of harmony with the genetically influenced nature and needs of mothers and their developing children, that they have contributed to conflict, stress and emotional and behavioral disturbances in the infant and developing child.”

He explains that our problem is that we don't trust our children. We've invented this notion that children are selfish, manipulative, tyrannical little things who are out to get us instead of recognizing the simple truth that they are naturally dependent on us to meet their needs. We set up children as the adversaries at exactly the time when we desperately need to be forging cooperative, loving connections.

Your baby needs to touch you A LOT. Ashley Montagu, Ph.D, says in *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin*, “The manner in which the young of all mammals snuggle and cuddle against the body of the mother and against the bodies of their siblings or of any other introduced animal strongly suggests that cutaneous stimulation is an important biological need, for both their physical and their behavioral development.”

It is a ridiculous, yet sadly prevalent notion that babies can be harmed by too much holding. All the latest research proves nothing could be further from the truth. Babies have serious physical and emotional needs. Meet them! A held baby gets to view things the way you see them, affording her an invaluable opportunity to peek at how the

world works. Even at this early stage, baby is learning about the culture she will someday inhabit.

Carrying a baby all the time is an acquired skill but one well worth developing! Babies are heavy to lug around initially, but the strangely magic truth is that even though they keep increasing in weight, they get easier and easier to carry. Part of the phenomenon is due to the fact that at about four months old baby starts helping by holding onto you and holding her back up straight when she straddles your hip. But the other part is that if you are a regular baby-carrier, you will get stronger faster than your baby gets heavier. Baby becomes your personal trainer who increases your resistance in tiny increments just as you are ready for it--your own personalized weight-lifting program.

The easiest way by far to get on a frequent-carry program is to sling your baby. They love it! Read on for all the reasons you'll love it too.

14. Strap baby on!

Babies who are worn in slings are happy babies. This falls under the category of listening to your baby and believing in her wisdom. Your baby does not want to be left to lie alone in a crib or carrier while you go about your day. Baby's cries are to alert you to this message. Yet carrying baby in your arms for much of the time would leave you exhausted and unproductive. The answer is the baby sling. This piece of

equipment should be the very first item on your inventory list. I cannot stress enough the degree to which it will enhance your life--and baby's.

Babies have been worn in slings in cultures other than our own for centuries. Why? Because they provide the ultimate win-win situation for parents and their offspring. Once you get used to wearing your baby, you will be amazed to find that you can do almost all the things you did before baby's arrival. Baby will comfortably snuggle in and contentedly observe your activities from the best seat in the house. But convenience for you is just one of the many reasons to practice this time-honored custom.

Being born thrusts a baby into an extremely unfamiliar and potentially terrifying set of circumstances. The best way to relieve this post-natal stress is to make things as familiar for baby as possible to ease the transition. In a sling, a baby can curl into the comfortable fetal tuck; he can hear Mommy's heartbeat and her voice, feel her breathing and her warmth, and enjoy the rhythm of her walk. Is it any wonder babies thrive under these conditions and dislike lying on their backs all alone in a crib or carrier? We have discussed the theory that a human's gestation period should be thought of as eighteen months—nine months in and nine months out. Babywearing is the solution for that second nine-month period.

Babywearing actually helps babies to regulate their bodily systems, know nighttime from daytime, develop a sense of balance, and stay

healthier. Dr. Sears explains: “Fussing and disorganized behavior is a withdrawal symptom—a result of the loss of the regulatory effects of the attachment to the mother. Babies should not be left alone to self-soothe, as some parenting advisers suggest. This style of detached parenting is not supported by common sense, experience, or research. Behavioral research has repeatedly shown that infants exhibit more anxious and disorganized behaviors when separated from their mothers. While there is a variety of child-rearing theories, attachment researchers all agree on one thing: In order for a baby’s emotional, intellectual, and physiological systems to function optimally, the continued presence of the mother, as during babywearing, is a necessary regulatory influence.”

Babywearing makes breastfeeding easy to do anywhere, but it’s especially important for bottle-fed babies! Studies have shown that the continuous contact of using a sling is even more beneficial to the bonding process than breastfeeding is. Babies have excess energy they are not able to discharge on their own. A baby releases this energy through her caregiver, by participating in the sling-wearer’s walking, talking, laughing, working, and playing. This is the framework in which bonding takes place, no matter how baby is fed.

15. Choose the best sling for you and then practice!

People stop me constantly when I’m out with Tuck to say, “Where did you get that? It looks so comfortable!” Most of the baby-carriers

currently available in stores are not true slings. They strap baby to your body in confining and often unnatural positions. They distribute baby's weight unevenly and put a tremendous strain on the wearer's neck, shoulder and back muscles. They end up in the bottom of the closet and baby ends up in the stroller. But all my mommy-friends who use real slings are ardent devotees who never go anywhere without them. So here's a little run-down on the best baby slings and how to get them.

My absolute favorite is the Over the Shoulder Baby Holder. It's unbelievably comfortable and it comes in really nice fabrics. (We get the most compliments on our tie-dye sling!) Its 2-ring design adjusts easily to fit a variety of wearers, yet it comes in sizes for added assurance of a perfect fit. The padding and even distribution of baby's weight contribute to its all-day comfort, and it works for newborns up to four-year-olds. It's available through people who act as distributors for the manufacturer. Call (800) 637-9246 to find your closest one.

There is one sling that's easy to find in baby stores that is similar to the OTSBH. It's made by Nojo and called The Original Baby Sling. If you are a tall person, you may like it just as much as the OTSBH, though the fabric selection is much more limited. But if you are of average height or shorter, you may find that the one-size Nojo holds your baby too low and too loosely for ultimate comfort. Ironically, it also has less fabric for expansion as your baby grows.

If you'll be considering your slings fashion accessories, as I've tended to consider mine, look into getting a Maya Wrap as well. The Maya Wrap has a design similar to that of the two previously described, but it is less comfortable because it lacks padding. The lack of padding does give it a more sophisticated look, however, and the fabrics are very beautiful. I use mine as a dress sling, when I want to wear Tuck to business meetings or fancier shindigs.

Maya Wrap offers a second design that is even easier to put on than the above mentioned slings. It has no feature for adjusting the fit, but you can buy it in sizes. There are no rings to this design. You just slip it over your shoulder and drop baby in. Again, the lack of padding makes it less comfortable than some, but it may be right for you if you find the ring-style sling too complicated. Order Maya Wrap slings by calling (888) MAYAWRAP.

A slightly more comfortable sling with the same design as this second Maya Wrap is the New Native Baby Carrier (800-646-1682). I love the organically-grown cotton version, and the deep pouch holds baby securely. But for me, the baby hangs too low in this sling, even in the smallest size (and I'm 5'6"). The directions include instructions for temporarily sewing a seam that would make it smaller. That sounds fine in theory but I'm just not equipped--machinery-wise or patience-wise--to start sewing on this thing. My very tall husband uses it when he exercises on his stationery bike with Tuck, and he claims it's

comfortable. But being used to the padding in the OTSBH, I find that all the unpadded slings hurt my shoulder after a while.

The most important thing to remember with any sling is that it's going to feel weird at first. So many moms tell me "I bought one of those but I couldn't get the hang of it," or "It wasn't comfortable for me." Wearing a sling seldom feels completely natural right away. And wearers often make the mistake of trying it for the first time when they're out somewhere and baby is already fussing.

Practice with your sling around the house for a few days before you venture out with it. Try all the different positions and always be sure the bottom of the sling crosses *low* on your back. Baby will cooperate best if you start walking around as soon as baby is in the sling. The slings all come with instructions, and *The Baby Book* by William and Martha Sears has an excellent babywearing section with illustrations of the different holds. (That book, by the way, is the absolute best all-around-baby-care book you can buy.) Trust me--the initial awkwardness will soon go away and you won't believe you ever lived without this invaluable device!

16. Let baby sleep where he's happiest!

While some authorities still advise against it, many developmental psychologists and more and more child-care experts are now endorsing a family bed. Since the stone ages, babies have slept next to their mothers, and co-sleeping was common to all human cultures up until a tiny blip

ago in the grand scheme of human evolution.

The custom of infants sleeping apart from their mothers is regional and recent, and as all parents know, most babies have a very hard time adjusting to it. The most well-known current proponent of forcing babies to sleep alone is Dr. Richard Ferber. In his book, *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems*, he suggests that “What is best for almost all children after the first few months of life is to learn to fall asleep in a crib or bed alone in a room that is fairly dark and quiet. They should not be held, rocked, or nursed.”

He acknowledges that baby will violently protest the situation, but insists parents never give in to their instincts to take baby to their bed. His instructions are to leave baby in his crib no matter how much he cries and let baby cry for longer and longer periods before comforting him until baby eventually learns that his cries will not get a response and he begins to sleep alone without excessive crying.

The book gained popularity because it delivered what it promised—babies who ultimately stopped bothering their parents at night. But parents would never have embraced his technique if he hadn't repeatedly assured them that his sleep-training regimen was in the best interest of the child. Though I'm sure Dr. Ferber believed that it was, many researchers have proven the opposite--that such deprivation of nighttime nurturing is exceedingly harmful to baby's emerging sense of self.

Child-care specialist Tine Thevenin writes, “A child who has been

forced to accept, after nights of terrified screaming, that her parents will not come to her rescue, will seem to give up and accept her condition. One cannot but wonder, however, what lasting effect this feeling of abandonment, this rage, this fear will have on her for the rest of her life. It is a powerful experience to call for another human being and be ignored.”

She points out that throughout the ages, shunning has been used as the severest form of punishment in many cultures, including the societies of Australian aborigines, ancient Roman citizens, Amish farmers, and West Point cadets. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, former chairman of the psychology department at the University of Chicago, “...often, the worst sanction the community can issue is shunning. The person ignored grows gradually depressed, and soon begins to doubt his or her very existence...We are biologically programmed to find other human beings the most important objects in the world.” Imagine how powerful that effect can be on an infant who has barely a grasp on his or her distinct existence to begin with!

If anyone ever tries to sell you on the Ferber method or any other method of sleep-training, please buy and read *Nighttime Parenting*, by Dr. William Sears. He sensitively and humanely offers sound advice for getting baby to sleep without subjecting him to psychological damage that could possibly last his lifetime.

My friend Julie began the co-sleeping habit accidentally the night

baby Luke was born. Still in the hospital, recovering from a C-section, she was nursing Luke in the middle of the night when she, Luke, and her husband all fell asleep. (Luke's dad was supposed to return Luke to his bassinet after the feeding.) The nurse reprimanded the peacefully sleeping family terribly when she found them, but Julie knew from that moment on that this was how she and Luke were meant to spend their nighttime hours. Her word for sleeping next to Luke was "heaven."

Luke is a secure, mellow, charming toddler now and Julie couldn't be more pleased with their ongoing family bed experience. She writes in his baby book, "Falling asleep and waking up times are special for Daddy, too. He travels and works long hours so his contact with Luke at bedtime, at night, and first thing in the morning really helps them connect and feel close to each other. Having Luke near me helps me be a better mom because I can comfort him before he wakes up from restless sleep. He doesn't ever cry to signal he's awake. He saves cries for when he's hurting from a bad fall or from an illness. The family bed has definitely helped Luke be a happier baby."

Ultimately, of course, it is up to each family to decide what works best for them as a unit. I've heard that some babies actually prefer to sleep alone and if that is the case with your child, you will do him no harm by honoring his preference. Some parents feel very strongly that they will not adjust happily to sharing their bed. In such a case, the baby is better off alone than he would be sleeping with resentful parents.

On the subject of family beds, Penelope Leach says, “Sharing a family bed will not stop your baby from waking up and it will not save you from night feedings in the first weeks. But if he is sharing your bed with you, your baby’s awakenings and his feeding will disturb you far less than they will if you have to go to him. And, because he is where he best likes to be—close against you—he will go back to sleep far more quickly and easily. Babies who sleep in family beds from early on often wake much less than other babies as they get older. As they get older still, they may wake but find it unnecessary to wake you. After all, a toddler who is with you in bed does not need to cry for a cuddle because he is already having it or can just snuggle up.”

17. If you must crib-train your baby, do it lovingly.

Crib-training is the ritual by which parents force a baby to accept that he will have to sleep alone in a crib in a room apart from his parents. Different experts prescribe different routines, but most resemble the Ferber method, described above, and involve leaving the child to cry alone for a specified time until he eventually gives up crying and accepts his fate.

A mother might assume that because she leaves her child to cry alone for only a short period of time, no harm can be done, but we must remember that babies have no sense of time. The abandonment a baby feels during any given moment is every bit as real as it would be if her

mother had left her, alone and unable to care for herself, forever.

If you are absolutely dead-set against welcoming your baby into your bed, or at least your room, Penelope Leach's crib-training approach is the one that seems the most humane to me. Your baby will most likely cry when left alone in a crib, since it goes against his nature, but leaving him alone to cry is not your only option.

Leach suggests going to your baby immediately every time he cries. Do not take baby out of the crib, and do not play with baby, but do touch and comfort and talk to baby until he stops crying. If you are a nursing mom, baby will probably accept this routine better from Dad than he will from you. It will be exhausting work for a while, but eventually baby will learn that his cries will not get him out of the crib. However, he will be spared the other lesson that often inadvertently goes hand-in-hand with crib training—the lesson that he is not valuable and his parents are unconcerned about his discomfort and fear. (See Way #59 for information about the *Baby-Go-to-Sleep* tapes.)

Be aware that even with the Ferber method, many babies simply will not ever comply. These determined babies never give up the hope that you will come for them if they signal you enough. If you have one of these, please surrender the fight and listen to your heart. Somehow, this baby is still certain that he is worth your time and attention—don't let him down!

18. Respect the reflex.

Infants can't control their limbs. This annoys them to no end. Imagine your arms and legs flailing about, quivering and twitching, and being helpless to stop them or regulate their activity. This lack of neuromuscular maturity is one of the biggest reasons babies cry when left alone on their backs. How do you turn this agitated baby into a happy baby? Pick him up and hold him close to your body. Like puzzle pieces, your body and his fit together in the exact manner so as to minimize those annoying disorganized movements.

Holding your infant close to your body lets him feel pressure from all directions, like he recently felt in the womb. It keeps him from startling, and keeps him in the fetal tuck, the most calming and comfortable position for infants, and the one that naturally helps their digestion and temperature regulation. If you can hold baby steadily for much of the day (a baby sling helps tremendously) you will greatly reduce the number of times he is vulnerable to the Moro reflex. Picking a baby up and putting him down frequently is not as beneficial since he's likely to startle each time you release him.

19. To swaddle or not to swaddle...Let baby decide.

Some newborns crave the containment feeling they get from being tightly wrapped in a soft blanket. It helps them to keep their limbs from flailing and from startling Moros. For many, a nice tight swaddle is like

an extra layer of hug. The feeling of pressure all around baby's body reminds him of the feeling of being in the womb—the more the pressure surrounds him, the more intense the association and therefore, the comfort.

If baby were lying unwrapped in a crib or bassinet, the pressure would only be coming from the side underneath him, which is not nearly as familiar or comforting. Most babies, when left in cribs, will seek out additional pressure by pushing whichever part of their bodies they can manage into the bumpers or wedging themselves up into a corner. What they are really looking for, of course, is your warm body to snuggle up against, but in its absence, they will settle for anything that adds to their sense of being surrounded.

For some babies, however, the confinement of swaddling is an unwelcome restraint. These babies just hate it. Try swaddling your baby and try loose, comfortable clothing and see which she likes best. Trial and error is the only route to getting to know your baby, so pay attention to her responses to everything you do.

20. Bathe with your baby.

For the first few months it's likely baby will not like being bathed alone. She doesn't need a bath every day. Once or twice a week is fine. But the best way to have a happy infant at bath time is to simply bring her in the tub with you. Baby is likely to love the feel of the warm water if

she can enjoy the comfort of your arms or Daddy's hairy chest at the same time.

Adjust the temperature of the bath water to baby's tastes—lukewarm or cool water is more appropriate for baby's thinner, more sensitive skin than the hot water you're probably used to. You can buy bathtub floater toys that indicate 91-97 degrees F, the comfort range for a baby's bath water. You might want to lower your water-heater thermostat to 120 degrees to eliminate any chance of scalding.

Older babies usually enjoy baths, even solo, especially if they include tub toys, songs, and lots of loving attention from you. Soapy massages feel great on hard-working little muscles, and the tub is an ideal setting for name-the-body-part games.

Many object to the shampoo-rinsing step, though. Tuck hated having to tilt his head backward, but didn't mind if I just poured water on top of his head from a cup and let it run down all over him. Be sure to use no-tear shampoo!

And after her bath, treat baby to a massage. Sharon Heller, Ph.D., in her fascinating book, *The Vital Touch*, says that babies who are massaged are "more social, more alert, less fussy and restless, sleep better, and have smoother movements. They enjoy playing with their mothers, who, in turn, enjoy their babies more."

And massage makes baby healthier, too! According to Dr. Heller, it can improve the functioning of the immune system for the whole life of

the child. In addition, “Massage stimulates circulation of the blood and lymph fluids, fuels the muscles with fresh oxygen and nutrients while flushing away metabolic waste products, releases physical tension and soothes the nerves by lowering the stress hormones cortisol and norepinephrine and by releasing endorphins in the brain.”

Check your library or bookstore for a book that teaches the best ways to give infant massages. Two good ones are *Baby Massage*, by Amelia D. Auckett and *Infant Massage: A Handbook for Loving Parents*, by Vimala Schneider.

21. Try to see the world through baby’s eyes.

Babies live completely and utterly in the present moment. They have no concept of a past or a future. The situation baby is presently in feels like all eternity to her. If she’s uncomfortable, there is no consolation in the imagined possibility that things will get better. She can only be consoled once they do.

The first few months of a baby’s life are probably kind of like living in a waking dream. Objects appear and disappear; noises come and go out of nowhere. Smells, colors, and lights are observed without any understanding of their origin. Babies just take it all in and gradually learn to make sense of it.

Until they do, you ARE baby’s world. Your baby will recognize and take comfort in your voice and smell within a few hours old. Within a few

weeks, she will recognize your face. Most experts believe that babies don't know they are separate beings. When Mommy sings, baby is likely to have the sensation, "we're singing."

Memory starts to kick in typically at around three or four months. That's when baby starts to remember other people and things she has regular contact with. She'll like her special and familiar people best and will take great comfort in the aspects of her day that remain constant, like nursing and spending time in her baby sling. You will still be the most important thing in her life, but she will at least begin to acknowledge that there are interesting things aside from Mommy.

22. Spend your baby bucks on things that will make baby happy.

Everyone sets aside a certain amount of money to spend on a new baby. How much you have available to spend is not nearly as important as how you spend it. Babies don't need their own rooms. Parents enjoy decorating and furnishing a baby's room far more than the baby enjoys spending time in it. In fact, if the plan is to leave baby alone in his room for bedtime or any other time, then this expenditure is likely to contribute more to his unhappiness than to his happiness. If you really want to decorate a nursery and you have plenty of money to spend, by all means do, but try to think of it as a storage place for baby's clothes and toys—not as a place where baby is to live.

Happy babies don't need cribs, strollers, swings, play-yards, or high chairs. All of those contraptions just serve to separate babies from contact with humans, which makes babies miserable. The following few Ways will give you ideas for how to spend that bundle of bucks I just saved you. And if you're still pregnant and haven't had a baby shower yet, read on for the best revisions to your wish-list!

23. Instead of buying a crib, take your baby into your bed.

All over the world parents take their babies to bed with them, and not just in cultures that differ greatly from our own. Every morning, babies in Japan, Africa, Israel, Mexico, and Sweden wake up contented and secure in the company of their loved ones. And while many American baby-care advisors are still handing out yesterday's lame advice about babies sleeping alone, surveys have found that 25 to 30 percent of Americans aren't listening to them.

In addition to all of the health and bonding reasons listed elsewhere in this book, do it because it just feels so darn good. Sure, it takes some adjustment, but once you get used to feeling that snuggly little warm body next to you at night you can't help but recognize how right it is. Especially if you've had a hectic day, or you've had to be away from baby more than you'd like, nighttime is a calm, protected haven for catch-up loving. If the bed you're in now is too small for an extra

occupant, why not spend some of that money you would have spent decorating the nursery on a bigger bed for you, your husband and baby?

Another option is to buy a co-sleeper. They're sold in baby catalogs and in many of the larger chain stores that sell baby furniture. A co-sleeper is like a crib that attaches to the side of your bed so that baby can sleep next to you. They don't offer as much opportunity to cuddle, but co-sleepers give more peace of mind to those parents who are initially nervous to have a tiny baby share their bed. A popular one is the Arm's Reach co-sleeper which sells for \$159.00 and later converts to a play-yard. (I don't recommend ever putting your baby into a play-yard, but they make fine toy-boxes!)

If you've already got a standard-issue crib, you can easily use it to extend your bed space. Just remove one of the crib's side railings and position the crib's railing-less side right next to your bed, getting it as close as possible. Adjust the crib mattress so that it is at the same level as your bed's mattress. If the mattresses don't meet closely enough for your peace of mind, you can buy a foam rubber thing called a bed bridge and cut it to fit your needs. They're made to fill in the space between two adjacent twin beds, turning them into a king-size bed, so they're sold wherever you buy your adult bedding, not in baby stores.

I actually like the transformed crib arrangement more than the co-sleeper because it gives all of the bed occupants more space. We've set up Tuck's crib this way and most mornings we find some portion of mine

or my husband's body borrowing the crib space, with Tuck in the middle of the bed.

There is no way to describe the deliciousness of waking up with a happy, affectionate baby. I would be hard-pressed to say which of the three of us benefits the most from that half-hour of laughing, tickling, and snuggling that starts each of our days, but I know we'd be a different family without it.

24. Instead of buying an expensive stroller, buy several baby slings.

Wear baby in a sling when you go out. It only *sounds* exhausting; you really do get used to it! You'll get so accustomed to wearing him that you'll feel strange without him. Remember that babies are like little weight-trainers, gradually increasing your muscle strength so that it's easier and easier for you to carry them.

Babies confined in strollers all by themselves for every excursion miss out on invaluable learning! If they are lying down, all they can see is sky or the inside of the stroller. If they are sitting up, all they see is a scary, distorted, knee-high view of the world. All they hear is random noise and all they feel is the unchanging stroller against one side of their bodies.

Think about how much more your baby will benefit if he's up at chest-level, right next to you. He smells your smells, hears your voice, feels your warmth and your touch. As you talk to him about the things

you pass, he gets the opportunity to enjoy your presence, your laugh, your world. He feels valued as your companion. He is *connected*; he gets to view the mall, the park, your neighborhood—wherever you take him—the way you view it, the way he will when he becomes a full-grown member of society.

In addition to this mode of transportation being so obviously better for baby, it's better for you too! The moms I know who routinely use slings instead of strollers all truly enjoy taking their babies with them wherever they go. They don't consider their babies inconvenient to take along. On the contrary, they think of the babies as welcome companions who make the outings more fun for them.

You may want to get an inexpensive umbrella stroller (around \$20.00) for times when you'll need to carry other items as well as baby. When I go shopping Tuck's always in the sling but I often bring the umbrella stroller along to pile my purchases in! It's good for toting a heavy diaper bag, too, though you rarely need to take your whole diaper bag out of the car because baby slings make great carry-alls. I don't even bring a purse with me anywhere. I slip one diaper in the bottom of the sling, under Tuck's tush, along with a zip-lock baggy with a few wipes in it. My wallet (which also houses my keys) gets slipped behind Tuck's back. The sling serves as a changing pad.

Believe me, this routine is a lot easier than hauling a stroller out of the trunk, wrestling it open, filling it with a bulky diaper bag and a

loudly protesting baby, maneuvering it through crowds, and searching for those terminally elusive elevators in stores and public buildings! (See Way #15 for the best slings and how to purchase them.)

25. Don't rely on baby containers.

The baby swing has become a dangerously popular babysitter. While it is true that your baby will prefer motion to lying static in some other type of container, the motion of the swing is not the kind he craves. Babies need the variety of movement that being carried by an active human provides. The monotonous back and forth of a swing can lull babies into trance-like states that do nothing for their development. The helpless little zombies will often retreat into an unhealthy sleep to shut out the repetitive stimulation. Better to use your swing budget to hire a neighborhood child to hold your baby while you do whatever it was you had hoped to accomplish while he was swinging.

Playpens (for some reason, they're politically-correctly named play-yards) today--serve no purpose other than to hold toys and baby-things. Take the time to baby-proof your house so that you don't have to put your mobile baby in a cage. Doing so would severely limit his opportunities to grow and develop at his own pace.

Highchairs aren't an unwise purchase if used only for brief mealtimes, but many babies eat much better and more willingly in a parent's lap. After about eighteen months, baby could graduate to a

booster-seat at the family table, which costs much less, takes up less space, and gives baby a greater sense of belonging.

Of course, there will be times throughout the day when baby cannot be in your arms (or anyone else's). It's fine to put him down on the carpet, on a soft clean blanket, where he can see you. Just keep these sessions as brief as possible if baby does not enjoy them. Once baby is sitting on his own he'll like being on the floor much more.

26. Help baby cope with car-seat anxiety.

There is one baby-containing piece of equipment that you'll have to buy and use—a car-seat. Most car-seats made especially for infants can be easily snapped out of the car and used as baby carriers. Since babies often fall asleep in moving cars, a snap-out carrier allows you to remove baby from the car without waking her. Don't rely on the carrier for much else, however. This type of container deprives baby of much-needed human contact and many important learning experiences. Slings are far better for transporting awake babies, but a lift out of the car-seat into the sling wakes some sleeping babies, and for that reason alone snap-out seats can be helpful.

Newborn babies often like the lulling sensation of a ride in the car, but as they mature, most babies go through at least one period of NOT liking being strapped into a car-seat. I've heard that as their inner ear mechanisms develop, some babies may be more prone to motion-

sickness. It can be hard for baby to understand why you won't hold her when she knows you're right there and can hear her request. The separation is especially hard on babies who must face backward in a backseat all alone.

If your baby is going through a difficult time with the car, try to travel when she's rested, full, and comfortable. Have a few new soft toys to offer. (New doesn't have to mean store-bought. A new soft toy could be a colorful sock with an old rubber squeak-toy inside it, tied at the top with some textured ribbons and yarn.) Sing happy songs and talk to baby so that she knows you're close by, and avoid long trips alone with her if you can. Build in extra travel time so that if baby is really upset, you can pull over, take her out of her seat, and nurse her or comfort her a little before resuming your trip.

Whenever possible during this trying phase, have someone else drive so you can ride next to baby in the back. She's likely to be much happier with some company to sing with and play with. Show her things out the window as you pass them. It's easy to nurse baby by just leaning over the car-seat a little.

If you have to be alone with baby in the car, and she's especially upset about the situation, try this trick my friend Abby uses with her baby Jessica. If Jessica starts fussing while Abby's in route somewhere, Abby pulls into a parking lot and nurses her *in the car-seat* until she falls asleep. Once Jessica is soundly sleeping, Abby can resume driving.

27. Learn to stay cool when baby can't.

Your newborn baby may cry a lot. He'll cry to signal needs and his needs will feel strange and very intense to him. He can't easily distinguish between feelings of hunger, cold, hot, wet, or loneliness. He just knows he feels bad and any bad feeling is a legitimate trigger for a bout of crying. He needs you to make it right.

Luckily for him, nature has designed you to be exceedingly uncomfortable when he is crying. Aside from your tender maternal concern for his welfare, your body goes haywire from the sound of his cries. Stress hormones are released into your bloodstream. Your blood pressure and breathing rate increase. Your muscles tense. The louder the cries and the longer they go on, the more mayhem is wreaked on your body's basic physiological systems. All this because nature wants to be sure that you DO SOMETHING to make your baby feel better. Your instinct to comfort him and his instinct to signal a need for comfort are in cahoots. Together, the two instincts ensure the survival of our species.

Even when their outwardly visible needs are met and they are being held and walked, some babies just cry more than others. Sometimes nothing seems to help. A parent can feel guilty or angry or guilty for feeling angry, but any negative emotion just makes the situation worse. If you've thoroughly checked for every possible problem baby may be having and tried every possible remedy and baby is still

crying, hold baby close and try to stay calm yourself since that's the only way you'll be able to calm baby.

Sympathy for baby's anguish is the best emotion for you to feel. If an adult friend had suffered a loss that made him inconsolable, your feelings would probably be lovingly supportive and you would want to do anything you could do to help while realizing that you are unable to fix the tragedy for your friend. Try to develop that mindset with your baby.

Sometimes there's nothing a parent can do to fix baby's upset frame of mind, but holding baby and saying soothing words will let baby know that he doesn't have to suffer alone, that you care about his suffering, and that you will do all you can to help. Remember, the problem is not your fault, and not baby's either. Some babies just have a more difficult time getting accustomed to a very new strange world. In those first few weeks, baby could even be still affected by drugs used during delivery. If you experienced a high level of stress in delivery, your stress hormones could still be in baby's system, and his cries could be a release of that tension.

28. Ignore anyone who tells you your baby is manipulating you!

One of the most significant barriers to raising happy babies is the bizarre notion that our babies are trying to control us. I don't know what paranoid parent first thought up this absurdity, but unfortunately it

caught on to the extent that many parents view their tiny babies suspiciously right from the start!

Look at your baby's face. Does he really look like he's plotting strategies to manipulate you into doing his bidding? Is that innocent look of helpless devotion a clever ruse? Of course not! He's a baby! Get over yourself and realize that this tiny creature is completely dependent on you for every aspect of his survival. If he seems a little demanding, cut him some slack. He's programmed to *need* you, not from any malicious perspective, but simply because human babies cannot survive without lots of help from attentive adults. Taking care of him is what you signed on for when you made the decision to bring him forth into this world.

You may be thinking of some particular toddler you know who very much fits the description of a manipulator. Since babies are extremely sensitive to their parents' feelings and expectations, the sad consequence of the babies-as-manipulators mentality is that many parents have caused their children to become exactly what they feared. If parents repeatedly act defensively with their children and treat the children as if they are the enemy, the children will almost certainly rise to the occasion and fulfill their parents' expectations.

If, on the other hand, parents lovingly recognize that toddlers are naturally very strong-willed little people who are often temperamental and who voice their desires loudly in their efforts to be understood, these

parents can use toddler-taming strategies that don't further aggravate the habits they are meant to curb.

First and foremost, when disciplining your child, don't take anything he does personally. Lots of toddlers bite or hit their parents when they are angry. This doesn't mean they are wild or bad or mean-spirited; it just means they are toddlers. By all means say a firm "no" and re-direct the behavior, but don't feel betrayed and angry over what is a natural and age-appropriate expression of an emotion.

29. Believe in the psychic bond so you can develop one with your baby.

Many well-meaning parents doubt their own abilities when it comes to listening to their pre-verbal babies. They wonder how they can possibly develop a reliable communication system. The answer is in spending time with your baby!

Think about your loving relationship with your spouse, or best friend, or maybe a sibling. Often in our close relationships with other adults, the slightest change in facial expression lets us know exactly what our loved one is thinking. Bonds like that develop through shared experiences. The more time you spend in direct contact with any person, the more enmeshed you become, and the more intuitive you are about that person's feelings. It works the same way with baby. And sleep-time

counts too! Being near your baby during the night enhances your connection during the day.

For a bond to grow, communication must grow, so be responsive to baby's signals. The more you make a point of trying to read baby, the more his efforts at communication will be rewarded, and the more effort he'll put into his communication attempts.

Baby-wearing Eskimo Netselik mothers and !Kung mothers are so in sync with their precious cargo that they know when their babies are about to urinate or have bowel movements! These amazing women feel the little gurgle in the baby's belly, or the tensing of the limbs, just in time to hold baby out away from their bodies long enough for baby to complete his natural function. Then they tuck baby back in beside them, skin-to-skin, and carry on with their work!

I've heard at least one anecdote of this psychic communication working in the other direction. My attachment-parenting friend swears by an unorthodox remedy for her baby Chloe's constipation. She wears Chloe in the sling against her body while she, the mommy, successfully defecates in the usual manner. Immediately following this display, Chloe is able to complete her business, as if her mother's digestive system had mystically transferred instructions to Chloe's less experienced one.

Weird!

30. Don't make baby a shut-in.

If your baby gets a clean bill of health after the first few weeks, there's no reason to keep her confined in your home. Babies love being outside. You can often soothe a crying baby by just walking out your front door. And while car-seats aren't always a hit, being in an interesting new environment often is.

Lots of moms think they're doing right by their babies by keeping them in the safely contained environments of their homes. But moms can go stir-crazy doing this, particularly if they were active before baby arrived. What's best for baby is having a mommy who's happy and enthusiastic, so take this time to treat yourself to some fun!

Young babies don't have any interests yet, so indulge your own! Take baby in the sling to an art museum, if that's what you like, or to an outdoor concert, or to your favorite store or restaurant. If you've worked most of your adult life and worked through your pregnancy, this home-with-baby time can be an opportunity to get the most out of your escape from the monotony of daily work obligations.

You'll want to keep baby's needs your top priority, but chances are that being held against your body as you participate in an activity you enjoy will be just what the baby ordered. Put simply, mommies who laugh and smile a lot usually have babies who do the same. Don't ever feel selfish during your baby's infancy for doing things that make YOU happy. As long as you include baby in your activities, the pursuit of your own happiness and that of baby's are practically one and the same. How

will baby ever learn the fine art of joyfulness without a consistent and convincing model?

When baby announces he's hungry, pull the sling up for privacy and nurse him as you walk. (Or stop to bottlefeed him.) If he needs a diaper change, lay the sling down on any relatively soft surface for an instant changing pad. If he's tired, a slung, cuddled baby will fall asleep happily against your chest.

I even know one attachment-parenting mom whose baby was so predictably mellow that she was able to take classes at a community school with baby content in the sling the whole time. (She sometimes walked back and forth across the back of the classroom when her baby indicated he'd prefer some movement.)

Get out with Dad, too! Unless it's nursing time, let your husband wear baby in the sling. Dads have a different feel, a different gait, and often a higher perch from which baby can look out on the world. Tucker prefers facing out when his dad wears him in the sling, though with me he prefers to straddle my hip. It's good for baby to get used to enjoying each of his primary caretakers' different styles of being with him.

My husband and I have never missed a party, a wedding, or a night out with friends in the year and a half since Tucker was born and we've never once done any of those things without him. As a result, he's used to our social scene and he almost always happily cooperates. He's especially amazing at movie theaters. As long as we time it so that he's

likely to be sleepy, he reliably nods off during the coming attractions as I sway in the back of the theater with him nursing in the sling. Once he's asleep, I sit down and comfortably enjoy the movie with him slumbering peacefully on my chest. (I always avoid loud and violent movies because I don't want him to subconsciously absorb any yucky stuff.)

As with any outing you take your baby on, be mentally prepared to leave or step outside if baby needs a break from whatever it is you're doing. Try to maintain an attitude of: "I'll do this as long as he's happy and I'll stop when he's not." Then if you do have to stop or leave, just be grateful for the time you were able to spend before his needs called you away. Having to leave a function beats sitting at home and not even trying to attend it.

31. Don't turn into a Mommy-Zombie.

Sleep deprivation is probably one of the biggest causes for post-partum depression. It can make the whole experience of new motherhood feel powerfully overwhelming and rob you of many of the joys of caring for your baby. The Mommy-Zombie condition is the result of being out of sync with baby and therefore waking much more than is necessary throughout the night.

Baby isn't the only one who suffers when he sleeps alone. As a new mother, you are as biologically programmed to sleep next to baby as he is

to sleep next to you. You may think that you'll get more sleep by sleeping apart from baby, but the reverse is probably true.

Your hearing is especially sharp after you give birth and babies can be noisy sleepers. But if you have your room monitor adjusted properly, baby's noises will be louder over the monitor than they would be if baby were next to you. They're also more grating because of the electrical interference and they're harder to interpret correctly because you can't feel or see baby to help your assessment of his condition.

Your natural protective instincts are heightened when separated physically from your baby, so you're much more apt to interpret noises as threats to baby's welfare than you would if he were right beside you. So you hear a little whimper and you jump out of your warm bed and rush down the hall to baby's room. Maybe he's sleeping fine, but it may take you half an hour to get back to sleep. If he had been beside you, you might not have woken at all.

Or maybe baby has woken up and he needs help getting back to sleep. By the time you reach him, he's likely to have fully aroused and be crying in earnest. It will take much longer to get him back to sleep than it would have taken if he had been beside you, and you only had to cuddle or nurse him at the first sign of his waking.

It turns out that nature has taken care of the whole sleeping problem for us, if we would only tune into our bodies and provide the right conditions for the solution to unfold. When mothers and babies

sleep together, and especially when the baby is breastfed, their sleep cycles actually align themselves to a mutual internal clock! Amazing as it sounds, research has proven that the close nighttime contact shared by co-sleeping mothers and babies causes them to go through periods of light and deep sleep at the same times throughout the night.

Practically speaking, that means that baby doesn't ever wake Mommy from the deep sleep she so badly needs. When baby goes through a light sleep stage (the stage during which babies wake) Mommy is going through one too, so that she'll often wake up about thirty seconds before baby does, anticipating his need for mothering. When baby starts to stir, Mommy can just pull him in close to her and nurse him back to sleep before he ever fully arouses. Mommy, barely having moved, can easily drift back to sleep, too.

I found this phenomenon hard to believe when I first read about it, but it has been working for me for over a year now, and many of my friends enjoy it too. Don't expect it to take effect the first night, though. You may have to sleep with baby for a few weeks before the two of you are completely in sync. And if you didn't sleep with baby from birth, taking him into your bed may not go smoothly for the first few weeks. It takes time for all the bed-partners to adjust to one another's company but the rewards more than compensate for any loss of sleep during the brief transition period.

If you're unlucky enough to have one of those people in your life who says things like, "Aren't you afraid you'll roll over on him and suffocate him?" thank her for her concern but tell her she's misinformed. While freak accidents like that do happen, they are extremely rare—about as common as babies dying accidental deaths alone in their cribs—and almost always due to the parent being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

You have an awareness called your proprioceptive sense which keeps you from rolling on your baby. It's the same sense that keeps you from rolling out of bed and keeps you from rolling onto your spouse or pet as you sleep. Position baby away from soft pillows; don't allow baby to sleep on a waterbed; and make sure everyone sharing the bed is 100% sober. Then put the rolling-over worry out of your mind and start getting the sleep you need to enjoy your happy baby.

32. Think like a mama kangaroo!

Human babies are born more immature than any other animals, with only 25% of their adult brain size. Unlike baby dogs, cats, horses, and elephants, whom can all walk within a short time of being born, baby humans are simply incapable of autonomous functioning. Even apes, our closest mammalian relatives, are born with 45% of their brains developed, a level human babies don't reach until close to the end of their first year when they are crawling.

The problem is that human brains grow so fast that babies' heads would never make it through the vaginal canal if the babies didn't get out of there at around nine months. That's why our babies are born so totally dependent upon us. If we look to nature for the best way to handle this early delivery situation (in a way, human babies are all extreme preemies!) we'd have to take our cues from marsupials, since they are the only mammals born more dependent upon their mothers than humans. Mama kangaroo's solution, of course, is to keep her baby right against her body in her pouch until he matures enough to venture out on his own. Just as kangaroos' bodies are outfitted with the right equipment for baby holding, humans' hips and arms are designed for easy baby-carrying. A baby-sling makes it even easier.

Almost all mammal mothers spend more time in close contact with their babies than humans typically do, in spite of the animals' greater maturity level at birth. Infant monkeys are almost never apart from their mothers during the first year of life. If they are forcibly separated, their whole little systems freak out. Stress hormones flood their bodies, their heart beat rates increase, and their immune systems go haywire.

Returning to their mothers brings their bodies mostly back to normal, but their sleep patterns and immune systems could suffer long-term effects. Primates are our closest relatives in nature, and many experts believe that human separation of mothers and babies is close on the trauma scale to that of infant monkeys.

Once again, this biological evidence supports the previously mentioned theory that an appropriate human gestation period should last at least eighteen months--nine months in and and nine months out of the womb. During that second nine months, babies should have almost continuous contact with their mothers and have their needs met immediately, as they had been when in the womb. It may sound like a difficult way to raise a baby, but once you start practicing this attached style of parenting, you will be amazed at how easy it is and how much it can simplify your life. It practically eliminates frustration for babies, and that means far fewer frustrations for parents as well!

33. Involve baby in your life.

In Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care*, he warned that if you held your baby too much she would forget how to amuse herself, feel bored, deserted and miserable when left alone, and cry for attention. For many years, moms trusted Dr. Spock more than they trusted themselves, and so they suffered through the anguish of letting their babies lie helpless and alone. Today, it is thankfully acknowledged that babies are *supposed* to feel bored, deserted and miserable when left alone, and they will certainly cry for attention, no matter how much they have been held. A baby who stops crying for attention when left alone has probably just given up hope.

Babies are not meant to "amuse themselves." Babies can't feed

themselves, move to avoid danger, or act autonomous in any ways that other young animals can. They are not meant to BE by themselves. And when they are close to their caregivers, they don't need amusement at all. When they feel right, because of their proximity to loving adults, they are perfectly content to watch and learn about their world. Babies don't need lots of play or even attention to keep them from being bored. A baby gets all the stimulation he needs simply by being held by an active adult as she goes about her daily work. If the adult talks to baby about what she is doing, all the better!

Babies like action. They love being involved in your cooking, cleaning, shopping, walking, and laundry folding. Babies naturally build up tension, and it is released through motion. Since they can't yet provide much motion for themselves, they need you to do it for them. Babies who are forced to lie still for long periods in a bassinet, baby carrier, or stroller will become frustrated because they have no outlet for the inevitable build-up of tension. All they want is to feel included and connected in the lives of their caregivers.

34. Exercise with baby!

After waddling around in slow motion for the last few months of your pregnancy, you probably feel gratefully light-on-your-feet, even if your body isn't quite what it was ten months prior. Celebrate by exercising! But don't make the mistake of dumping baby off at

Grandma's so you can solo it to the gym. Most babies love to indulge the habits of an active Mama. If the weather is welcoming, plop baby in the sling and go for power-walks around the neighborhood. The even distribution of baby's weight, thanks to the sling, will help your aerobic workout.

Talk to him about all the things you see as you pass them. It's my personal observation that babies are more receptive to learning things when they're outdoors. If you walk often enough with your pre-verbal baby you will be astonished at how quickly he later learns the words for all those familiar sights. By fourteen months, Tuck knew "tree," "grass," "dog," "sidewalk," "bird," "stop sign," "mailbox," "doorbell," "car," "vroom! vroom," "light," and "moon," just from his regular walks in the sling.

In bad weather, try this fun alternative with your pre-mobile baby: Prop baby up in a spot where he can see you. Play some fast, upbeat music and dance wildly in front of him. He'll think you are fascinating and you'll be getting a great workout. If it's dark, you could even arrange the lighting in the room so that your dancing creates a shadow-show on the wall behind you. Once baby becomes a toddler, he'll love to dance along.

When baby gets old enough to support his head easily, you can do the following exercises while holding him. (Tucker loved our exercise program, and he clearly thought the whole routine was done solely for his amusement.)

Try Baby Crunches: Lie on your back and pull your knees up to your chest. Then place baby on your shins, so he's lying on his stomach with his face peering over your knees and the two of you are facing one another. While holding baby in place with your hands, straighten your legs out and bring them back. Make a funny noise or face or both every time you bring baby toward you and your exercising efforts will be rewarded with delicious baby giggles—the ultimate incentive to keep at it!

The Baby March is great for thigh and butt muscles. Hold baby against your body with baby facing out. Then walk around the house taking giant steps and bending down low with each step so that you feel the big muscles in your legs and butt working. Try singing a slow, funny song in a low voice while doing this for extra silliness. Baby gets an interesting up-and-down tour of the house and you get a real body-sculpting session.

Even regular sit-ups are more fun with baby on your stomach, leaning back against your thighs. Just make sure baby is old enough not to fall off sideways. With your hands behind your head, as your head goes down, bring your elbows together over your face and say “Where’s Mama?” then, as your head comes up, open your elbows and say “Peek-a-Boo!” to baby, or “Here’s Mama!” or whatever makes baby smile most.

For push-ups, just lie baby on his back on the floor, and do push-ups over him, bringing your face down close to his with each repetition.

For leg-lifts, lie on your side with baby next to you on the floor and sing or recite nursery rhymes in sync with your movements.

35. Let your baby's independence develop naturally.

There is absolutely no need to train a child to become independent. If allowed to grow and blossom in their own ways, at their own rates, children will naturally become independent. When we force them into independence before they are ready, all we are doing is hopelessly undermining their confidence in themselves and in the world, thereby, ironically, making them much more needy and dependent. Yet, in our country, many experts advise early independence “training” that causes much unhappiness for babies.

Training is not for human infants. We train dogs because in order to live with them, we need them to become very different animals than the ones they would be if left to their own inherent natures. We train our pets not according to what's best for the animals, but according to what's most convenient and pleasant for us, the owners. Human civilization would not have risen within the prehistoric society if adults had insisted on training children to be different than their species disposed them to be. Human infants are meant to be dependent, and to try to train them to be otherwise is to deny a real aspect of their humanness.

Children know how much nurturing they need at any given time. They will not ask for more than is necessary for their optimal growth. It

is possible to nurture too much only in a situation where a parent is continually rushing to comfort when the child has not indicated any need for comforting. If a parent listens carefully as the child signals his needs for nurturing, the child will always get the exactly correct dose.

It's the babies who cry out for attention and are not given it who will have a lingering sense of longing and never be satisfied. Babies who are always given the love they ask for will have no anxieties about being abandoned or losing that vital connection with their loved ones. They are the ones who are free to develop a deep sense of security and well-being that allows for true independence and happiness. A child whose needs are met and who has a strong attachment to his parents will develop a foundation of trust that will allow him to become independent.

Understanding and meeting a baby's needs makes him feel loved, and teaches him how to love. Child development specialist Selma Fraiberg explains the feeling of love and intimacy between a mother and child as the child's first falling in love experience. If this first love is free of frustration, anger, disappointment, and fear of abandonment, a child stands a much better chance of finding secure, healthy love as an adult.

Most adults in America today were raised during the years when early independence training was strongly urged by the then-popular experts. And we're a mess! Never before have so many Americans regularly attended support groups and paid therapists to help them overcome their dependencies. Self-help books sell in record quantities.

Independence training didn't work!

36. Let baby touch it!

Your baby doesn't just *want* to touch everything in sight; he *needs* to touch it! It's one of the most important ways babies learn. Here's a trick that could save you some frustration: Before your baby hits the crawling stage, make a point of letting him touch everything that attracts his attention. Sometimes he'll want to touch things that could be dangerous if he were to later come across them unsupervised, but it's still best not to keep these things off limits entirely. That will only heighten their mysterious appeal and make the most dangerous things in your house the most enticing ones for baby.

With baby in your arms, take him on a tour of the baby-proofed electrical outlets, stopping at each one long enough for him to touch and thoroughly examine it. Let him push the buttons on the stove, the dishwasher, and the telephone. Hold a pair of scissors for him while he examines the safe end and sucks on the handles.

If you do this often enough before he learns to crawl, your baby will have no need to head straight for every danger zone as soon as he's mobile enough to do so. Babies are notorious for doing that simply because those are the things that have been kept from them and therefore they are the things babies become most curious about. If he's already grown bored with the taboo stuff, it will be easier for you to direct

his attention to appropriate playthings once he's getting around on his own.

When he's old enough to understand rules better, you can verbally direct his touching and help him to recognize what's off limits. Dr. Sears recommends saying "yes touch," for safe things, "no touch," for unsafe things, and "soft touch" for people and animals. To curb grabbing, he suggests "one-finger touch."

37. Help your baby become aware of his own body.

Baby becomes aware of his body by how it relates to your body. To understand where he begins and ends, he touches you and realizes that his fingers in his mouth feel different from his fingers in your mouth. The more you make regular contact with your baby, the sooner he will make this distinction, and the more clear and comfortable it will be for him.

Since a psychological sense of self grows out of a physical sense of self, a strong awareness of his body is one of baby's first steps toward healthy self-esteem. The more complete the body contact, and the more time spent in contact with you, the stronger the association for baby. In *The Vital Touch*, Sharon Heller Ph.D, speculates that American babies, who are typically held for less than 25% of their days on average, are especially at risk for a number of psychological problems.

Since babies are designed for continual contact, the minimal contact that most American babies receive contributes to the widespread

lack of respect American adults have for their bodies. Negative body image and diseases like anorexia nervosa and bulimia are epidemic in our society. Dr. Heller writes of our relationship with our bodies, “Stuffing them, starving them, imbibing them, implanting them, and tucking them, we neglect them, abuse them, and transform them. The one thing many seem unable to do is to love them.”

Simplistic as it sounds, psychologists agree that the more love we felt from our parents, the more we are able to love ourselves. Similarly, the more physical love our little bodies received, the more we are able to love our own big bodies when the time comes.

38. Celebrate your marriage while you celebrate your baby.

Happy marriages are necessary for happy babies. Babies pick up on every nuance of their parents’ emotions, and a conflict-ridden marriage is an often-overlooked cause of extra stress in babies. You and your husband need to recognize together that you have done a tremendous thing by manufacturing this little person and turbulent emotions are common during any time of great transition. Keep the lines of communication open and try to maintain a shared sense of humor about the very normal deprivations that come with new parenthood.

Many people are afraid that sharing their beds with their babies will hurt their marriages, particularly their sex lives. If a couple believes that, it could very well become a self-fulfilling prophecy. But there is no

reason that it needs to be that way. A great number of happy couples who sleep with their babies report that they never felt closer or more in love than when they were lying in bed together, gazing upon their perfect, tiny creation.

A shared love for a baby often awakens a new and exciting facet of marital love. Sleeping with your baby will bond you to her in the same way sleeping beside your spouse helped to bond the two of you. And it works for fathers, too! Often fathers are unsure of the best ways to become important in their babies' lives. Co-sleeping is a wonderful way.

Of course, the bigger question for some people is, "What about sex?" And many would answer that sex can be just as good, or even better when there is a baby in the bed. Babies will not be harmed in any way by witnessing a loving act between their parents. But even if you are uncomfortable with the baby in the same room, you have every other room in the house to experiment with--which can be a lot more fun than your previous routine anyway.

The fact is that new parents typically do not have as much sex as they did when they were childless, and this has nothing at all to do with where in the house the baby sleeps. Some researchers maintain that a woman's low level of estrogen following childbirth reduces her sex drive, but that doesn't explain why so many new fathers also temporarily lose interest in sex. Maybe it's fatigue; maybe it's overwhelming infatuation with the new family member; it doesn't really matter what causes it.

I want to stress that there is absolutely nothing wrong with your marriage if you mutually agree, or even non-verbally agree to shelve lovemaking for a while. It's sad that our culture makes such a big deal out of sex that couples often start to doubt their marriages simply because they are surprised by how little sex they are having after a new baby enters the picture.

Societal mores tend to pendulum back and forth. A few generations ago people felt something was wrong with them if they wanted too *much* sex. Today we think there's something wrong if we want too *little*. Whatever works for you and your husband is the perfect amount of sex, no matter how horrifying it sounds to your childless girlfriends.

And neither is there anything wrong with you if you do experience a high level of interest in sex after your baby is born. Of course, if your interest level and your husband's go in opposite directions, that will feel like a problem. Just try to keep it in perspective. If the conflict is truly attributable to the baby, bear with one another and realize that your child's infancy is a very finite period in a long, loving marriage. The two of you will have many more years without an infant than you'll have with one. Besides, sexual feelings come and go in strong marriages for lots of reasons that have nothing to do with babies. This natural and healthy fluctuation in sex drive is nothing to worry about—the problem is in the worrying itself.

39. Handle your anger like a grown-up.

It is natural to get angry. Babies are exceptionally good at doing things that produce anger in parents. It is normal and expected that your baby's actions will sometimes make you want to scream. IF you scream, however, you are not behaving responsibly as a parent. An out-of-control caregiver is terrifying for a child. And your baby will not learn to improve her behavior by witnessing bad behavior on your part.

Chances are good that at some point your baby will do all of these things: She won't sleep when you want her to. She will cry for what appears to be no good reason, sometimes for a very long time. She will vociferously object to being put down, or being put in her car seat, or being put in a bath. She will not eat when you think she should. She will eat much more messily than you think she should. She will break things. She will prevent you from doing things that you loved doing in your pre-baby life.

But if you feel anger rising up inside you whenever one of these perfectly natural events takes place, you could be sending your baby a dangerous message. Babies are unbelievably sensitive to the emotions of their parents. Even if you think you are hiding your anger, your baby is probably sensing it and applying it to herself. In the worst scenario, you could find yourself unable to keep your anger in check and lash out physically or verbally at your baby.

If you *occasionally* notice yourself feeling angry with your baby, and you make a real effort to act appropriately, you will not do your baby any serious harm. But if you are often angry, seek help. Get counseling; take up yoga; meditate; hire a mother's helper; but DO SOMETHING to break the pattern. Learning to get a grip on your anger could be the most worthwhile action you ever take on your child's behalf.

40. Respect the rate at which baby's abilities develop.

Most babies will follow a similar pattern of mastering physical and mental skills, though some may vary from the standard progression. They all master all of the skills, so it really makes no difference when they master them. Parents love to compare the rates at which their kids learn new tricks, despite the fact that it means absolutely nothing to be early or late. When they walk through the kindergarten classroom door, the child who sat up alone at four months will be no better at sitting than the child who didn't sit alone until she was nine months old.

A baby's personality and interests affect which skills he chooses to develop at any given time, too. A baby who is fascinated by practicing his fine-motor control may build block towers before he learns to walk, while another baby would never waste time sitting there with blocks when there's so much ground to cover and exploring to do. Some experts believe that the rate at which babies reach physical milestones is hereditary. So don't rush and don't compare!

As a general rule, babies hone their skills from the top down and from the middle out. That means that baby will first master head and eye control, then arm control, and finally leg control. And he will make movements with his arm from the shoulder before he gains control of his hands, and finally his fingers.

Babies are born with an innate drive to master more and more complex tasks. The best thing you can do to help is just watch and encourage. Pay attention to your baby's preferences and try to provide him with the environments and props he seems to need to progress.

There is no need to actually teach your baby to sit, crawl, walk, or use his hands more effectively since these things will all happen for your baby when he is ready. (If baby is very far behind the norm, or if your instincts tell you there may be a problem, ask your doctor for a thorough assessment.)

When you see baby focusing on a new skill, don't distract him or try to help him. Encouragement and praise are great when they match baby's own obvious satisfaction at mastering something, but they can be detrimental when they interrupt or interfere with baby's efforts. Even at this very young age, babies can sense pressure from you. When baby accomplishes a new feat, he's likely to be excited about it, and that is the best time for you to share in baby's pride and happiness.

41. Beware the “good baby” trap!

We all know one--the mommy down the street, or at the playgroup, or in our family, who endlessly reminds you what a “good baby” she has. Her baby sleeps through the night. He eats, drinks, naps and poops at exactly the same hour every day. He never cries. This mommy’s not-so-subtle message to you is that she has her baby under control, she has trained him to be a convenient and exemplary child, and you would do well to listen to all of her child-rearing advice.

Run! Run away from her as fast as you can! Babies who don’t bother anybody and accept whatever regimen is imposed upon them are often babies who have given up any hope of having their requests honored and their needs met. They are at risk for becoming withdrawn children, internally angry adolescents, and depressed adults. When babies are chronically left to cry, they usually go one of two ways—they either become openly angry and miserable, or they become “good babies” who learn at an early age to stifle their feelings because no one cares how they feel anyway.

42. If you can’t be there, find the best care for your baby.

If you absolutely must work while your child is still very young, finding the best possible care situation for your baby needs to be your number-one priority. If you don’t have a mother or mother-in-law who

conveniently lives close by--and who has a heart of gold and no other daytime obligations--you'll have to look into the next-best options.

Spend as much money as you can. That's the only place in this book where I'll say that. You can get away for the first few years spending practically nothing on clothes, equipment, toys, and food for your baby, but when it comes to hiring someone to care for her, you'll need to be willing to break the bank. Of course, the possibility exists that the best situation won't be the most costly; the point is that you must eliminate cost as a consideration when you are determining what the best situation is.

And since you'll be spending so much, go through that exercise one more time where you work out all the math (commuting expenses, wardrobe expenses, taxes, etc.) to see if you absolutely, truly do have to go back to work right away. Was it a decision you made before your baby was born? Many dedicated-to-their-profession women plan pregnancies without giving the tiniest thought to taking a few years off to spend with their babies. But until that going-back-to-work day comes, you can't possibly know what it is going to feel like to leave your baby for so many hours at a time. Lots of moms who are doing it would tell you it feels really, really bad.

Some women cite financial reasons for returning to work, when the reasons have more to do with self-esteem and identity issues. It's horrible that our culture values child-rearing so little that almost any career

elevates a woman to a higher social standing than the career of pure mothering. If in your heart you want to be at home, then it doesn't matter what profession you were trained to do; no work is more important than raising your baby.

And if your reason for working truly is financial, you have to ask yourself how badly you want to raise your own child. Almost all of us could step back a notch or two on our scale of living without endangering ourselves or our children. The money will always be there to be made; this particular child's infancy is fleeting and precious.

But let's say that your reason is that you love your work and know you will only be happy if you continue it, or you are returning to a full-time job after spending as much time as you could spare at home being a mommy. Don't feel guilty! Every situation is unique and lots of studies have shown babies of two-working-parent families to be no worse for the wear, as long as they received loving, high-quality care. The most important thing to remember, particularly as your baby grows older, is to always be emotionally available and communicative with your child when you *are* present.

The best scenario for your baby will be to have a substitute caregiver who will treat your child as much like you would as possible. You have to come to terms with this person being very special in your child's life. You want someone who has taken care of babies before, who is warm and happy, who shares your parenting beliefs, and who is

looking for long-term employment. You don't want baby to become attached to someone who will disappear.

Give yourself plenty of time to investigate all the possibilities and stay open to different situations. While babies are generally more comfortable in their own surroundings, some moms have found excellent care in the homes of women who become certified to take care of children. Day care has its obvious disadvantages, but there are some good ones out there. (The smaller the number of children per adult, the better.) Ask lots of questions and trust your instincts when you're talking to the potential caregiver. If you don't instantly like her and get a warm feeling from her, your baby probably won't either.

43. Set your caregiver up for success.

Okay, you've made your decision. Now don't even think about leaving your baby for at least another week, and several weeks if he has already begun feeling stranger or separation anxiety. During this transition period, spend every day in the company of your child and the caregiver together. You will, of course, have to begin paying the caregiver and this will feel like a tragic waste of money with you right there as well, but remember—this is your one big expenditure for your baby's happiness. Try to get to know the person (or day-care staff) yourself. Be friendly and smile when you speak to her. Your baby will pick up your attitude and this will be his first clue that she's trustworthy.

If you have chosen someone who cares for other children as well, this is your opportunity to see her in action. If she is caring only for your child, let your baby determine the pace at which he interacts with her. He'll likely go through a period where he needs to go back and forth between the two of you before he's ready to handle a complete hand-off. If the caregiver doesn't want to spend time with you and baby together, she's not the right person.

Make sure before you begin working that your baby is happily attached to the new caregiver. You'll know by the ease with which he goes to her and the length of time he's happy with her once you've left the room. You'll be glad you've invested this time when you're back at work wondering what your baby is doing at that very second. You'll be able to conjure up a comforting image much more easily than if you had abandoned him the moment you hired his new friend.

If your child is a toddler when you first decide to leave him with a caregiver, how you say goodbye can make a big difference in her success with him. Even if your child makes scenes over goodbyes, never sneak out when he is busy playing because he may lose trust in you. Try to keep it short and affectionate. When parents hesitate or draw out their goodbyes, their toddlers sense their anxiety and have a harder time parting. Even if you feel sad, try to act cheerful and avoid saying things like, "I'll miss you." Your emotions are exceptionally contagious to your child in this kind of insecure situation.

And even when you think he is ready to be on his own, if he has a particularly hard time saying goodbye that first day you may want to arrange to hang around until it's easier for him. An article in *Parenting* described a daycare situation in which, "one little girl sobbed nonstop on her first day—and her second and third. She definitely needed a longer time than the others to adjust, so her mother sat quietly in the room reading the newspaper for the next ten days. Finally, when we both agreed that the daughter was ready to stay alone, her mother said goodbye. That time there were no tears."

Babies would almost always prefer their mommies, but if your child's daily situation is loving and he's getting plenty of the right kind of attention, toss the guilt out the window. Be prepared, though, to step back in at times. There may be days or whole weeks when your baby simply needs you. Whether he's sick, going through a rough emotional growth spurt, or just inexplicably angst-ridden, you will have to make a decision between letting your child suffer and letting your work suffer. Listen to your heart and make that dreaded phone call to the office.

44. Full-time mommies, unite!

A full 62% of American women with children under age six work outside the home, yet statistics show that most women who plan (before giving birth) to return to work regret their choice when it's time to leave the baby. For some, the choice is reversible and for others it's not.

Mothers who do put their careers on hold often remark how lucky they feel to be able to stay at home and raise their children.

Being a full-time mommy is no easy job, though, especially when you take it upon yourself, as most full-time mommies do, to be a full-time housekeeper, cook, and errand-runner as well. If you expect baby to play alone while you get things done, baby is likely to protest and the tension will mount in both of you. Let baby be involved in your activities. Housework and chores may take twice as long, but you'll be simultaneously interacting with baby, so think of it as getting two things accomplished at once!

One of the more enjoyable activities you and baby could share is cultivating friendships with other mommies and babies. As much as you and your baby love one another, and as healthy as it is for you to spend all your time together, you may start to go bonkers with no daytime adult companionship and it's good for baby to see other people too, including little people. Margaret Mead says, "The worst thing is just having the mother boxed up with her baby twenty-four hours a day, which nobody ever meant to have happen in the whole history of the human race."

If your parenting practices are in sync with those described in this book, you'll find many like-minded mothers in La Leche League. And while you certainly don't have to share parenting styles with every friend you make, you'll find it is easier to compare notes and plan activities with your babies when you're on the same general parenting path. (Avoid

parenting debates with other moms, though. It's a sensitive subject for most people and everyone wants to believe they're doing their best by their children.)

Many public libraries and bookstores have regular storytimes for babies where you could keep an eye out for friendly-looking mommies with babies your baby's age. MOMS Clubs (Moms Offering Moms Support) are free and vary greatly in their activities from chapter to chapter. For information, send two dollars to MOMS, 25371 Rye Canyon Road, Valencia, CA 91355 or e-mail momsclub@aol.com. You could even start your own playgroup by taking out an ad in your community paper or posting notices in nearby parks, places of worship, or community centers. I met a wonderful bunch of like-minded moms by responding to an ad for an "attachment-parenting playgroup."

There are lots of baby classes you can participate in with your infant, too. Organizations like Gymboree, Mommy & Me, My Gym, Amanda's Place, and Kindermusic all purport to be for baby's benefit but as far as I can tell their greatest value is as a meeting ground for moms with similar-aged babies. (Okay, after six months or so, the babies seem to actually enjoy the programs, too!)

It can really enhance your enjoyment of your baby to have friends who have babies, too. Besides having all that new-mommy stuff in common with you, the moms at these groups and classes are likely to

have similar schedules to yours, while many of your established pre-baby friends may be working.

Even if you're a shy person who never found it easy to start new relationships with strangers, take a chance with one of these organizations. Openers like, "How old is he?" and "Wow! He has your eyes!" are a lot easier to deliver than those cheesy lines we used for meeting guys back in our single days. Most new mothers love to talk to anyone who shows any interest in their offspring, especially if you begin with the perfunctory, "He's so cute."

Once you've lined up a few good mommy-buddies, visit one another's houses frequently. As you spend more and more time with these women, your baby will get to know them, and eventually you'll be able to babysit for one another. You could even set aside a day of the week where you take turns entertaining one another's babies. Just think how much you could get done if you had a mom and her baby at your house, playing with your baby while you paid bills, scrubbed bathrooms, wrapped gifts, or took care of whatever it is that's been piling up for you!

45. Ban the S-Word!

Mistrust all persons who use the S-word with you in reference to your baby. Babies cannot be spoiled. Babies who are responded to immediately and are frequently held grow up with a far greater sense of trust in the world and confidence in themselves. After all the studies

that have been done, most people know this by now and you have my permission to scornfully inform anyone you come across who hasn't heard the news.

Ignoring a crying baby only makes him become more and more miserable and frantic and insecure. He may eventually stop crying on his own, but only after he has assimilated the information that he is not worth his parents' time and attention. He will likely grow to become a clingy, whiny toddler and then a child who is often fussing and unhappy.

Fear of spoiling is a tragic bond-inhibitor! *Newsweek* magazine stressed the importance of an attentive mother-child relationship as the foundation upon which all learning and feelings are built. This all-important bond helps to form the brain's circuits for learning language, math, music, and emotional maturity. It is literally the springboard from which the child's whole personality will unfold.

Renown infant researcher Stanley Greenspan calls it "the essential partnership" and even Sigmund Freud described the mother-baby bond as "unique, without parallel, established unalterably for a whole lifetime as the first love object and as the prototype of all later love relationships for both sexes."

In their wonderful book, *What Every Child Needs*, Elisa Morgan and Carol Kuykendall quote pediatrician Dr. Frederic Burke, who says, "I firmly believe that early physical experience with parents' loving hands and arms is imprinted in the child's mind; and while apparently

forgotten, it has a tremendous influence on the child's ego and the kind of adolescent he or she becomes.”

My friend Holly points out, “When fruit spoils, it's because it's been left alone to rot, so why do people think kids can be spoiled by too much attention? You can only ‘spoil’ a thing by neglecting it.”

46. Don't obsess over baby's health!

It's natural to worry about your baby's state of health, but the more you can relax, the happier baby will be. You are biologically programmed to do everything within your power to ensure that your baby stays healthy, but there is only so much you can do without making life unnecessarily difficult for you and for baby. Within reason, try to keep baby's environment germ-free by insisting on frequent hand-washing for all baby-handlers; watch baby carefully for illness-signaling cues; change diapers frequently to avoid rashes; and make sure baby is properly nourished. Then, put all threatening thoughts out of your mind so that you can enjoy parenting your healthy child!

A friend confided to me that she constantly conjures up horrific mental images of her baby being seriously injured in her absence. Lots of parents are haunted by these imaginings against their will, so don't feel crazy if you are among them! Humans are hard-wired with a strong need to ensure the safety of their offspring so as weird as these visions seem, they serve the purpose of keeping us alert to our mission.

The best thing you can do to avoid panic attacks is to keep baby close to you as often as possible, including during the night. Nothing freaks a parent out like the fear of SIDS. It's been highly publicized that babies are at a reduced risk for SIDS if they are placed on their backs to sleep, but that is not the only precaution you can take against this most bewildering source of anxiety for fearful new parents. There is much evidence to support theories that co-sleeping reduces the chances of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) as well as helping to regulate babies' digestive systems and other bodily functions.

SIDS researcher, Dr. James McKenna writes, "Co-family sleeping in humans, during at least the first year, is a universal, specieswide normative context for infant sleep, to which both parents and infants are biologically and psychosocially adapted." He goes on to say the pattern of infants sleeping close to their mothers "has developed over at least four million years of evolution as a specific response to the biological and social needs of the human infant."

His studies have shown that proximity to a breathing parent during sleep helps to regulate baby's own breathing patterns, thus lessening the threat of SIDS. Geography backs up the research. The highest incidents of SIDS are in urban societies where most babies sleep alone, as in the U.S.A., United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. In urban societies where babies sleep with their mothers, as in Hong Kong, Stockholm, Tokyo, and Israel, SIDS statistics are far lower.

If you're sharing your bed with baby, you'll be able to detect fever much sooner, too, enabling you to get it under control before it gets too high. You'll forge a closer bond with baby, making it easier for you to read baby's cues so you can better distinguish between illness and general grouchiness. And what better way to stop obsessing over baby's welfare than to have her right under your watchful wing?

47. Let baby decide when to start eating solid foods.

If you're breastfeeding, your baby is eating well. There is no *nutritional* reason to start feeding him solid foods until well beyond the half-year mark. For developmental reasons, however, you'll want to be on the lookout for signs that baby would like to give it a try. When you are eating, does he reach for your food or open his mouth when you open yours? Most babies are very clear in their requests for solid foods, making hungry faces and attempting to grab everything you try to eat.

Pediatricians generally recommend rice cereal as baby's first food (preferably mixed with your breast milk) but I like Dr. Sears' suggestion of a soupy little glob of mashed banana on your fingertip. He points out that your finger is soft and warm and baby is already familiar with it. If baby spits that first bite back out at you, he's giving you an unmistakable message. Hear it and trust it and give him some time before you offer solids again.

If baby swallows enthusiastically and opens up for more, you've officially begun the solid food stage! There are lots of books about what to feed your baby, so I'll let you research that elsewhere. But to keep the eating baby a happy baby, you'll have to learn to trust in his signals. Never force a baby to eat because you think he should eat. It's perfectly appropriate for breastmilk or formula to make up about 90% of baby's diet at nine months, and for breastfed babies, that percentage would still be fine beyond his first birthday. If baby turns his head away, clamps his mouth shut, or just looks disinterested, honor his request to end a feeding. By the time he really *needs* to eat solid foods, he'll *want* to eat them, though you may still have to get creative in your marketing of them.

48. Once baby's eating solids, make them yummy!

Jarred baby-foods used to contain sugars and starches until everyone went nuts about it and now most contain nothing but the food they are impersonating and water. They're presumably much healthier now but the problem is that they taste incredibly bland and a lot of babies won't eat them. I can't help but wonder if that little bit of sugar was such a bad thing if it helped to fill babies' tummies with green beans, turkey, and squash. Some experts maintain that babies don't know to crave sweet or seasoned food and they'll be happy with the bland stuff, but my experience and that of many of my friends has not borne

this out. Tuck soundly rejected even the purest, organically-grown, jarred foods, but took to eating heartily when I mushed up tastier versions for him.

Even when baby has begun eating in earnest, don't expect any consistency in her preferences. The foods she hates today she may love next week. The amount she's happy eating may vary greatly from day to day as well. Watch for her cues and TRUST YOUR BABY. It's her appetite, her stomach, her decision. Period. Babies will not let themselves starve. Your only job is to frequently offer nourishing choices.

At around six months, most babies love practicing their fine motor skills by picking up finger-foods. Some babies may need to eat iron-rich foods at this point, and I've found Cheerios to be the best-received iron-fortified finger food. (They do contain some sugar, though, so if you're a real health-food-mom, don't sue me over the Cheerio advice. This book is about *happy* babies, not ones nourished in any specific fashion.)

Since Tuck insisted on feeding himself almost from the beginning, I used to smear whatever pulverized food I had made for him onto Cheerios and dot his tray with them like tiny canapes. The gooey puree made the Cheerios sticky on top and even easier to pick up! When he got older, I'd spread stuff onto pieces of cheese, thinly-sliced apple, or whole-wheat bread cut up into little bites.

At one year, baby may play with her food more than eat it. Distressing as this period may be for the more neatness-driven among

us, baby does actually learn from this experimentation. At some point, however, you will want to begin curbing the smushing, dropping and throwing tendencies. You know your baby best. Once baby is capable of understanding mommy's feelings, you can explain that the mess makes you unhappy and you need for her to concentrate her efforts on eating instead of playing. If baby persists, just move her away from the table and end the meal. She'll learn eventually that you won't allow certain activities with food.

Baby will reach a stage when she desperately wants to hold her own spoon. Let her practice feeding herself. It will be very, very messy, so I don't recommend trying it with pureed carrots or any orange vegetables because they're the worst stainers. Try mashing bananas in a bowl, leaving convenient little clumps that will be easy for baby to scoop. If you use jarred baby-food, mix in a little dry baby cereal so it's lumpier. After age one, egg salad is great because it's just clumpy enough to stay on the spoon well.

Starches are generally favorites of babies, but meats and veggies were more tricky in our family until I discovered a fabulous invention: the good old crock pot--also called a slow-cooker these days. In the morning you just throw in some chicken or meat (you can buy it already chopped up), vegetables (frozen work fine!), and canned tomatoes, chicken broth, or water. Season creatively, turn it on and that night you have a great dinner for everyone!

I swear, there is no way to do this wrong and you can vary the ingredients for a different stew every night. The best part is that everything turns out tasty and very mushy, so all you have to do is lay out an assortment of the vegetables and meat pieces on baby's tray for him to pick up and eat. (If baby is not eating finger-foods yet, dump some in the blender.) I could get Tucker to eat almost anything this way. The consistency was just right for gumming and the seasonings improved the taste of the foods he had previously rejected in their less-altered states. (Babies shouldn't have too much salt, so add grown-ups' salt at the table.)

49. Teach your baby to expect happiness.

Many psychologists believe that happiness is a learned condition. Babies who spend much time during their first years of life in a state of unhappiness will learn that unhappiness is the normal way for them to feel. We all know adults who repeatedly create unhappy situations for themselves. These people seem not to know how to be happy. Most likely, that pattern developed for them in infancy. We all subconsciously seek that which is familiar, whether we consciously want to or not.

If we keep our babies as happy as possible when they are babies, they will come to think of happiness as the normal way to feel. These babies are the ones who grow up to become people who create good situations and relationships for themselves, and who are able to stay

positive even during trying times. Which kind of adult do you want your child to become?

Besides, parenting an unhappy child is hard, unsatisfying work for *you*. Keeping your baby happy while he's a baby will go a long way toward making your parenting role a happy one for all the years to come.

Research has shown that attachment-parented babies who are carried in slings, breastfed on cue, and sleep with their parents typically cry for less than half the amount of total minutes than do detachment-parented babies, who are kept in carriers, fed according to schedules, and forced to sleep alone. The longer a baby cries, the more stressed and out-of-control he gets, and the more accustomed he becomes to the state of unhappiness.

The lack of stress-producing situations in attachment parenting is the reason attachment-parented infants appear so much more calm and peaceful. And even better benefits show up later in babyhood. By the time they reach their first birthdays, attachment-parented babies cry less than one quarter as much as their detachment-parented neighbors! Clearly, these babies have come to recognize happiness as their normal emotional state.

I've had the privilege of witnessing first-hand the long-term effects of attachment parenting and they are nothing short of magical. Without exception, the older children I know who were attachment-parented are warm, self-assured, content people who are clearly at ease with

themselves and enjoying their lives. They are smart, funny, and popular with both their peers and with adults. They are exactly the kinds of kids we all dream of having. Heck, they're the kinds of people we all dream of being.

Out of all the things you plan to teach your child, what could be more important than teaching him the art of happiness?

50. Un-frustrate your mobile baby.

Once baby gets mobile, the most common reason for crying is likely to be frustration over his inability to use his unfolding skills as much as he'd like and anger at you for being the one who keeps stopping him. Babies have a burning desire to explore and learn and no capacity for understanding that certain situations put them in danger, or endanger people's belongings.

The flashing pictures and funny noises coming from your laptop are intriguing and baby wants to touch. You stop him, and he gets mad. He does not understand why you won't let him explore the wonderful toy and moments later he won't even remember that you wouldn't let him, and he'll probably try again. This drives you batty, but it drives baby batty, too. It can help you get through it to remember that baby is just as frustrated as you are and he is not trying to manipulate you nor is he purposely not minding you. He is merely acting out his innate need to learn. Distraction, once again, is your best device for keeping baby safe

and un-destructive while removing him from the undesirable activity.

Try to frustrate baby as little as possible by baby-proofing your house and keeping lots of interesting things that he CAN explore scattered around for him to find. I like to rotate the scattered objects frequently, so that every day is a new scavenger hunt adventure. Once he's crawling around, don't just hand baby a new object to play with. Let him find it on his own. A rinsed-out plastic ketchup bottle with a penny inside for noise-value once kept seven-month old Tuck intrigued for the better half of a morning.

Sometimes, even without your interference, baby will be frustrated by his inability to do something. It's important to let babies try to do things on their own, but there's nothing wrong with helping them out if the task being attempted is something you know they will fail at. A baby who is trying desperately to climb a table leg so as to retrieve the stuffed animal that is hanging over the end of the table will appreciate a lift so that he reach the animal. If, on the other hand, the baby is just learning to crawl, and the animal is only slightly out of reach on the floor, it is better to wait a few minutes to see if baby will cover the ground on his own. He'll be more thrilled when he gets the toy that way and will feel new confidence over his achievement.

51. Help your baby to become emotionally expressive!

Your child will learn to express her emotions freely if you consistently acknowledge her feelings and empathize with her. When she is an infant, responding promptly to her cues will give her the message that her wants and desires count.

When she is an older baby, her emotions will often seem unwarranted to you, like when she crumples to the ground as though boneless, wailing dramatically because you won't hand her the fascinating garden shears she sees you using. It would be easy to trivialize her despair and say, "Don't be so silly. Play with this toy instead." But by brushing her off, you are telling her that her feelings are wrong.

Even if you feel she *is* wrong to be so upset, try to put yourself in her shoes. She has a very strong, built-in drive to learn about the new things she sees, including the garden shears. If you take the time to help her deal with her feelings, she will feel validated. She will know that her emotions are valuable and that she is valuable. Get down on her level, look her in the eyes, and say, "You really wanted to play with the garden shears, didn't you? It's hard when we want something and we can't have it. I won't let you play with the shears because they are sharp and might hurt you. Let's find something else that will be fun to play with."

You'll get her past the upset much more quickly this way, and her whole mood is likely to improve because even though she was denied the

shears, she was made to feel understood and special in your eyes, which is what she wants and needs more than any plaything.

Always pay attention when your older baby or toddler tries to tell you something. Even if real language is still months away, if you look your baby in the eyes, nod sympathetically, and try your hardest to interpret her communications, you will be surprised at the level of understanding the two of you can reach.

52. Encourage baby to be her own person!

Even in the very first year, babies begin forming the self-image that will stick with them for life. Much of this self-image comes from you. Often babies have distinct natures right from birth, but be careful about labeling your baby as “quiet and shy,” or “brave and adventurous,” or any label that might limit your child from developing her full potential in every possible direction.

At around eight to ten months, baby begins to know she is a separate person with her own wishes and desires and she begins to loudly voice her new-found will. A real sense of independence probably won't surface though until around twelve to eighteen months, when baby will become an adept experimenter who will do things with the specific intent of getting a reaction from you.

She'll be delighted to repeat any action that makes you laugh or praise her, but unfortunately, she may also feel compelled to repeat

actions that evoke a negative response. She's not trying to be bad; it's all just part of the experimentation process. She may know that you said "no" once, but how can she know if you will always say "no" unless she tries it a few dozen more times?

In the first half of the second year, she'll gain the skills to work out solutions to problems, use tools to achieve goals, think of and name things that she can't see at the time, and even imagine and pretend. She's begun the process of inventing herself. Though this period does represent a crucial time for establishing rules and enforcing them, try to keep restrictions to a minimum. Unless you are sensitive to baby's burgeoning sense of self, you may unwittingly squash the early buds of personality traits that you later would have come to treasure in her.

53. Help baby through the unhappy diapering phase.

At some point after eight months old, many babies become nearly uncontrollable wiggle-worms on the changing table. I had a song that I reserved only for diaper changes that would usually work to stop Tuck's initial protests. But there were times when the song wasn't enough and I could barely hold him down.

Start every diaper change expecting the best. If you're happy and playful and give baby a toy to distract him, he might not remember to fuss as readily as he would if he senses that you expect him to start fussing. I found a particularly affective distraction to be a helium balloon

hovering over the diapering site, with the ribbon dangling just low enough for baby to pull on the string as the changing takes place. (Never let babies play with balloons unsupervised since they pose several safety risks. Babies can choke on pieces of broken balloons or get ribbons over seven inches long caught around their necks.)

My friend Jaimie lets eight-month old Emily open and close the wipes box and pull out a wipe or two. This treat, reserved for changing-time only, serves to fascinate Emily enough to keep away all thoughts of protest.

My friend Julie was able to psych-out a squirmy nine-month old Luke with positive reinforcement. She says, “I began praising Luke for being so cheerful and accommodating while I was changing him. We even applauded after every diaper change, and I made a point of thanking him for helping. It worked! Not the first time, not the twentieth time, but after about a week, he became a partner in the diaper-changing process. If I were to advise another mommy, I’d encourage her to start thanking her baby and praising diaper etiquette long before diaper changes become an Olympic event!”

54. Take baby with you when you travel.

Many new parents lament the loss of the pick-up-and-go lifestyles they enjoyed before baby entered the picture. But when you practice attachment parenting, vacationing as a threesome can be almost as

carefree! While most babies do enjoy a predictable routine, it's easy to keep attachment-parented babies happy while traveling by giving them a full measure of their favorite familiars—your body, your voice, and plenty of your loving attention. If you keep baby close to you and are sensitive to her needs, the new batch of exciting stimuli will likely be a great treat for her.

Air travel is free for children under the age of two who are held in your arms. If there's room on the plane, some airlines will let you put baby's car seat in the seat adjacent to yours and strap baby into it. Some offer discounted fares to entice you to buy a seat for the car seat. I never took advantage of any of this. The airlines tell you that it's safer for baby to ride strapped into a car seat because in extreme turbulence the baby could fly out of your arms. I chose not to worry about that possibility because I had Tucker strapped securely to my body in the sling, where he was much happier than he would have been in a car seat for the whole flight. (I'm not so much advising you on this point as sharing my own experience. Whether or not to put your baby in his own seat on a plane is a personal decision.)

Whenever possible, plan plane rides to coincide with baby's typical naptimes; the movement and rumble of the engine help babies to doze off. If you have baby in your lap, nurse on the way up and down (or if you aren't nursing, give baby a bottle or pacifier or your finger to suck

on) to alleviate pressure on baby's eardrums due to altitude change.

Every breastfed baby I know sleeps peacefully on planes while nursing.

If you're flying with a toddler, give him an opportunity to run around (closely supervised!) in the airport before you board the plane, so he'll work off some energy and be ready to cuddle and relax on board. Bring new books and soft, quiet toys and request a bulkhead seat so you'll have room for lap games. Some airlines serve baby food or crackers on request.

If you're traveling a great distance, a direct flight might not be the best route. A break in flights will give baby a change of scenery, a chance for a comfortable diaper change, and for an older baby, an opportunity to run around again.

Train travel is great for babies! It affords you a rare opportunity to give your total attention to baby without interruption from phone calls or other demands on your time. If your baby is past his first birthday, he'll likely be fascinated by the train station and trains. Take advantage of the passing scenery outside the window for sharing new sights and words with baby. Bring new books and soft toys that you can play with together.

Even lengthy car-travel can be a lot of fun for everyone as long as you have at least one other driver along. But don't expect baby to sit happily in the backseat alone. Whoever isn't driving needs to be playing with baby in the back, and if that person is the nursing mommy, all the

better! My friend Amy has made several cross-country car trips with her husband Steve and baby Stephanie. Steve drives, Amy breastfeeds Stephanie in her carseat, everyone talks and sings and has a great time. One advantage to car travel is the opportunity to play your own music (or baby's) and to sing or play as loudly as you like. Car sunshades help to keep baby comfortable in hot weather.

Staying in hotels is easy with a breastfeeding, co-sleeping baby. Baby is not likely to mind the unfamiliar surroundings if he's sleeping in a king-size bed between his very familiar parents. And if you're nursing, you won't have to worry about how to warm formula or baby-food. If baby is eating solid foods, travel with some convenient snacks to supplement the nursing.

It's always a good idea to pack an extra bag with one day's worth of stuff in case of lost luggage. And if baby has any allergies or chronic medical conditions, find out before you leave if your doctor will handle medical problems by phone or give a local referral.

You know your baby best—keep her preferences in mind when choosing your destinations. Any environment with a comfortable temperature and activities that allow you to carry baby in the sling with you is a winner with infants. Toddlers enjoy the chance to toddle, but otherwise still aren't as demanding about the kind of entertainment they enjoy as the preschoolers they're about to become will be.

55. Be there for the rough spots!

When your darling, sweet child suddenly turns sour and grumbly for what appears to you to be no reason at all, crank *up* your mothering. Your first inclination may be to give the little grump some space and give yourself a needed break, but you will actually prolong your agony by doing that.

Growing is very hard work and the natural growth process will occasionally be more than your child can comfortably handle. During these high-stress times, he needs extra cuddling, extra play-time with you, extra nursing, and extra love. Moving *toward* your child will help him to get over the rough spot quickly and healthily, whereas moving *away* from him will only cause his stress to intensify and last longer.

Remember, too, that your baby is very sensitive to *your* stress level. If something in your life temporarily causes you to be less available to your baby (emotionally or physically) don't be surprised if baby's temperament changes too. Instead of blaming him for the decline in his behavior, try to understand that he just misses your attention and needs some reassurances that you are there for him.

56. Be a thrifty toy shopper.

Your baby does not need a lot of toys. For the first year, every single thing baby comes into contact with is a fascinating object to explore and learn from, including everything in your home that you give

baby the opportunity to examine. And if you're like many new families, you'll find that toys are filling up your home without any help from you. Many parents never even get the opportunity to select toys for their babies once all the relatives and friends have satisfied their gift-giving urges.

But if you somehow find yourself without playthings for baby, and baby seems bored with all of your home-found gadgets, check out your local thrift and consignment shops! Baby certainly won't know the difference between second-hand toys and new toys from pricier stores, and your toy budget will go a lot further. The best toys are the basic, traditional ones that baby can manipulate herself, like balls, blocks, and stacking toys. Look for wood or plastic standbys that offer plenty of pushing, pulling, and turning features. Keep it simple. Baby may be intrigued by complicated battery-operated toys when she sees them perform, but those without batteries usually offer greater learning possibilities. The more a toy does on its own, the less there is for baby to do.

Blocks, in particular, provide an exceptional array of learning opportunities. They offer young babies the chance to practice fine motor skills and older ones the chance to imagine and create, building confidence and competence with every block placed. They foster an awareness of size and shape, gravity and balance, and cause and effect. *Child* magazine points out that math and science form the foundation of

block constructions. Blocks enrich pretend play and even enhance the development of language skills.

Variouly-sized balls, too, are fascinating to babies for different reasons at different ages. A simple activity like rolling a ball back and forth with baby for many repetitions makes new connections in baby's brain, helping it grow and giving baby the satisfaction of intentionally causing an effect in his world. In one study, an eleven-month-old joyfully rolled a ball to a caregiver 180 times before losing interest in the game. I've found inexpensive Ping-Pong balls to be a favorite for the toddler set once throwing skills kick in. They're easy for little hands to grab and throw and light enough to keep damage to a minimum. Buy extra and always keep a few stashed away for that day when all those balls that have dotted the house for weeks find their final resting places beneath your household appliances.

When you bring toys home from thrift or consignment stores, you'll want to wash them for your own peace of mind. If you've steered clear of battery-operated toys, you'll probably be able to dump your whole haul into the upper rack of your dishwasher (plush and soft toys can usually be washed in the washing machine). It's a good idea to do this periodically with all of your baby's toys anyway, particularly if your child or a visiting child has been sick.

Some mommies are squeamish about it, but I see no reason not to also buy clothes from thrift stores, as long as you wash them before baby

wears them. Babies often outgrow clothes long before they show any wear and tear, and you may find really adorable once-pricey stuff that you would have never shelled out for in a department store. Any big baby equipment, though, must be checked out to make sure it's up to the latest safety-standards.

As your baby outgrows toys and clothes, if you don't know a younger child to give them to and don't plan on saving them for your next, bring them to the consignment shop! The consignment shop's low prices, coupled with the trade-in value of your old stuff, make it easy for you to provide an ever-evolving rotation of playthings to keep baby happily interested in learning and taking on new challenges.

57. Don't underestimate the consequences of too little loving attention.

Babies need loving attention so much that an absence of it creates a host of negative behaviors as they mature. Attention-deprived children can grow to become either excessively clingy or emotionally withdrawn preschoolers.

If the parent is only responsive to the child when the child is happy and perfectly-behaved, the child could learn to stifle all negative feelings and become what is necessary to engage the parent, but those stifled feelings can surface later in frightening ways. These children learn to hide their emotions at home, but then may act out aggressively in school,

subconsciously seeking from peers and teachers the response they believe their real selves deserve--rejection.

Babies who are deprived of loving touch may later, as children, get dirty a lot just so that a caregiver will wash them, or get hurt a lot so that someone will wash and kiss their boo-boos. Children can even become sick from a subconscious craving for hands-on attention from their parents. They gladly trade wellness for the feel of a hand frequently checking their forehead or cheek for a temperature, or the extra hugs and sympathy-cuddles a sick child warrants.

When touch-deprived children reach adolescence, many become sexually promiscuous in an attempt to satisfy the still unfulfilled need for human contact. They'll likely be unable to establish emotional attachments with their lovers, however, since they will have long ago set up defenses to protect them from further rejection.

Drugs are another danger zone for adolescents with unfulfilled needs who might subconsciously find parallels between the bliss of human contact and the steady flow of pleasurable sensations that drug use promises. And the prevalence of violence among our country's adolescents is likely due to the same root problem. In *The Vital Touch*, Sharon Heller, Ph.D., cites a study done by James Prescott--a neuropsychologist formerly with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare--which concludes that the principal cause of human

violence is “a lack of bodily pleasure derived from touching and stroking during the formative periods of life.”

58. Make up songs for baby!

Create your own personal songs about diaper-changing time, car-travel time, bath time. Make up the words and set them to familiar tunes like Twinkle, Twinkle, London Bridge, or Mary Had a Little Lamb. If you always sing the same song with the corresponding activity, baby will not only enjoy the activity more, but he'll know what's coming as soon as you start singing. It's one more way to pave those early communication pathways with baby, and a creative exercise for mommy-brains in danger of atrophy from too much repetition of traditional songs and nursery rhymes that are stupid half the time anyway.

Since the day my brother discovered that the letters in Tucker's name fit perfectly into the Mickey Mouse theme song, we've had lots of fun with variations on Disney's original lyrics. Tuck's first word after “Mama” and “Dada” was “boom,” a word from Dada's special song for him. He used it to request a singing-and-dancing session. By the time he was a year old, the same request had morphed into a precious side-to-side swaying motion while he trilled, “La, la, la...” He was remarkably in tune, as he accurately repeated the first three notes of his then-favorite song. He would do it louder and louder until someone got the hint and started singing with him.

My friend Reyna sings the most adorable song for her baby Charly (and for Tucker, too) whenever a small boo-boo happens. The tempo and rhyming pattern of the song immediately captivate the little victim and nine times out of ten, he stops crying about the boo-boo so he can listen to the song. I would offer you the words to this magic remedy, but the song is from Mexico and it's sung in Spanish. The beginning translates loosely into something like, "Get better, get better, you little frog's hiney," which doesn't sound nearly as poetic in English.

59. Play music for baby.

Baby will love your voice best, but playing recorded music can be a great source of comfort and fun, too. When Tucker was a newborn, he would respond dramatically to the Enya CD I had played frequently throughout my pregnancy. If I played it when he was tense or crying, within the first few notes, his whole little body would soften and relax against me. As an older infant, he would visibly brighten whenever I played music and as a toddler he never fails to jump up and dance when he hears a catchy tune--be it a TV commercial or even the ch-ch, ch-ch in my office of a fax coming in!

Music is used in many hospitals to help preemies gain weight and to help children recover from injuries and chemotherapy treatments. In *The Mozart Effect*, Don Campbell tells the story of a music producer, Terry Woodford, who produced a tape of lullabies echoing the sound of a

human heartbeat that could be used to calm infants and small children and help them sleep. Of course, an actual human heartbeat would probably have worked even better--but for those babies who are forced to fall asleep alone, it is encouraging that music can deliver such great results.

Campbell writes, "Initially, he gave away tapes to 150 day care centers, but several hospitals also obtained copies and put them to the test. At Helen Keller Hospital in Alabama, an experiment with fifty-nine newborns found that 94 percent of crying babies immediately fell asleep without a bottle or pacifier when exposed to the music. At the University of Alabama at Birmingham, nurses used the *Baby-Go-to-Sleep* tape for infants recovering from open heart surgery. One baby, struggling on a respirator, was near death when desperate nurses turned to Terry's tape. To their astonishment, the baby calmed down, fell asleep, and lived." The producer went on to give away thousands more tapes which are widely used in neonatal intensive care units all over the country. You can get one by calling (719) 473-0100.

60. Research your human heritage.

As I've stressed throughout this book, you do know exactly how you are meant to relate to your baby. Our biological make-up has equipped us with all the right instincts to meet our baby's needs. The trick is to fully trust in our instincts and disregard the prevalent,

erroneous notions of a society that has gone far astray in its childrearing practices.

One of the best ways to reinforce these instincts is to research the human animal. If I had the magic chance to pass one law that would affect the whole world, I would make Jean Liedloff's classic book *The Continuum Concept* required reading for every expectant parent. Please, please, please buy this book and read it! The author studied and lived with Stone Age Indians deep in the South American jungle--the existing contemporary society that most resembles that of prehistoric humans. Her findings about human nature are so completely astounding, and yet so recognizably right, that once you have read the book you will never look at your baby the same way again.

Oversimplified, the premise is that all animals function according to a continuum based on the way that species has always functioned since the beginning of its evolution. Every living creature is born with a hard-wired set of expectations, or instincts, to facilitate its survival. For millions of years, human babies were breastfed on cue, slept next to their mothers, and were carried constantly. The survival of our species depended on it. It has only been a few thousand years—a nanosecond in the grand scheme of evolution—that things have been any different. A few thousand years isn't nearly enough time to change the hardwired expectations of a species, so our babies are born expecting the same sensory stimuli their ancestors received.

This is why babies behave the way they do. They are born expecting to be carried around by active adults, so they are soothed when you hold them and walk with them. Our distant ancestors had plenty of foraging and working to do while wearing baby, and baby expects that kind of activity from you! It's not just that babies want to be nurtured in this way—they crave it from their innermost beings. Any deviation from their hard-wired expectations is perceived as a terrifying threat to their survival. For our ancestors to have put down a helpless baby and left it in a place all alone would have meant death for the baby at the jaws of predators.

Babies today are born with that same instinct that says they require continual human contact for protection. Being left alone triggers a barrage of stress hormones. They cry out as though they are being tortured and the truth is that they are. These intelligent little creatures are telling us that we are not fulfilling our roles as human parents. They are telling us with perfectly clear and recognizable signals and we as a society are ignoring them because someone has advised us that it is normal and healthy for babies to be left to cry.

Back in the 1930's, Margaret Mead observed two New Guinea tribes, the Arapesh and the Mundugumor. The Arapesh were loving, peaceful people who carried their babies against their bodies, nursed them until they initiated weaning, and treated them with respect and playful affection. The babies seldom cried, and if one did, he would be

immediately comforted at his mother's breast. Generation after generation, the Arapesh enjoyed a beautifully functioning society of communal living.

The Mundugumor were openly aggressive and hostile with one another and with surrounding tribes. Their babies were kept in hard, stiff baskets and received little contact with their caregivers. When a baby cried, his mother would scratch the outside of the basket to silence him. Babies were held only enough to provide adequate nourishment for their survival, then returned to the baskets. As one would expect, these babies grew to fit perfectly into their culture, which was a violent, disjointed tribe, notorious for warring and headhunting.

61. Remember that babies live in the present moment.

The lack of enough sensory stimulation is one of the biggest causes of the agony that millions of babies endure because their mothers have lost touch with their primal instincts. Another is the nonchalance with which our society has come to treat a baby's crying. When babies' needs are not met, and their cries are ignored, there is simply no way for them to be spared psychological damage to some degree.

You may be thinking, "But what about my cousin's baby? I know she lets him cry alone in his crib at night, and every time I see him he's smiling and laughing. He seems so happy and well-adjusted." The fact that the consequences of baby's unfulfilled needs are sometimes not

apparent for several years is one of the saddest aspects of detached parenting. I've listed the long-term effects elsewhere in this book—the lack of self-esteem, the difficulty in communicating and forming relationships with others. But on a short-term basis, the detachment-parented baby could seem very happy when in the company of other humans. After all, babies have no concept of blame, or even of time. The moment they are experiencing is the only moment they know.

Jean Liedloff explains that well-intentioned but detached mothers have no idea how poorly they are treating their beloved children because the deprived babies figure out that smiling is one way to get the attention they so badly crave. “Because he smiles encouragingly whenever she comes to him, his mother is convinced that she is the appreciated mother of a happy baby. The bitter ordeal that is all the rest of his waking life does not create any negative feeling toward her; on the contrary, it makes him all the more desperate to be with her.”

Babies desperate to be held and nurtured will soon learn to repeat any behavior that helps them toward that goal. And they may appear to be even happier than attachment-parented babies when they *are* in the company of other human beings because the experience is such a welcome and wonderful contrast to the rest of their bleak lives.

62. Making dressing time fun for baby.

Some babies hate the feeling of air against their skin when they're naked. Others love it so much that they hate having clothes put on them. The same baby could go through stages where both of the above statements describe him. But most parents will experience at least one phase in their baby's babyhood when dressing time is no fun.

Obviously, the more comfortable your baby's clothes the more he will enjoy wearing them. Very young babies need wide necks or snaps because their little pumpkin heads are so darn big for their bodies. Having a tight shirt pulled over their faces is scary stuff for infants, so talk soothingly and give up immediately on any garment that doesn't slide over the head easily. The comfiest choices for young babies are cotton bodysuits that go on from the bottom.

When baby is a little older, it's easy to make up games that go with dressing. As the shirt goes over the head you say, "Where is Nicholas? I don't see my Nicholas!", then as his head pops through, "There's Nicholas!" Or as you work a hand through a sleeve, "Where is Andersen's hand?" Once again, songs made up for the occasion can go a long way toward making dressing-time a fun time.

Snap any pre-snappable snaps before you start the actual dressing process, and don't begin without thinking through your game plan. You may have to work lightening-quick to get done before baby starts protesting, even with the games. For some reason, "Oops!" always bought me some time. If Tuck started squirming, I could pretend to drop a sock

and exclaim “Oops!” in exchange for a laugh that would last just long enough to get that last button fastened.

If you live in a warm climate--or at least have a warm season where you live--let baby try out nakedness, indoors and out! It allows for more skin-to-skin contact (particularly if you're willing to go around scantily clad yourself) and gives baby the chance to feel the warmth of the sun (for brief periods!) and the caress of the wind. Most parents will opt for at least a diaper, but my friend Kathleen lets her toddler Cullen enjoy the backyard completely au naturel, much to Cullen's delight. If she tries to leave a diaper on, he indignantly does his best to remove it.

Shoes are particularly bothersome to some new walkers and it's very hard for a parent to tell if a particular shoe is comfortable for a child. My pediatrician says there's no need for those specially-designed-for-babies, orthopedic shoes that cost a bundle. He and many other docs feel that barefoot is best unless baby is walking around outside where his feet need protection. Then, any shoe that's flexible and comfortable will do just fine. I've got to believe that Mother Nature's pretty good at this stuff. She probably built baby's feet in such a way that his walking talents would unfold best if we left her design alone.

63. Stay focused on the big picture.

There will be many times in your baby's first few years when his demands on you will seem overwhelming and you will feel impossibly

imposed-upon. It's tempting in these moments to take parenting shortcuts that seem to offer quick solutions. Don't fall for these traps! As terminal as the condition seems, your baby will outgrow this incessantly demanding phase. Babies have big needs. The only way to help them to need you less in the long run is for you to meet those needs fully as they arise.

There will be times when even a toddler will need to be constantly in your arms. If you comply, he will be reassured and soon he'll be comfortably off on his own again. If you refuse his request, the need will intensify. He'll be more clingy and more whiny and stay that way until you both go crazy or until you finally give in and give him the intensive parenting he craves.

The well-known child psychologist, Lee Salk, has shown repeatedly in his research that needs which are satisfied go away. Those that are not stay with the child and often turn into different needs as the child matures. Dependency in infancy is natural and healthy. But children who are deprived the opportunity to be happily dependent never mature into happy independence. Their dependencies remain, but become the unhealthy kind we're so used to seeing in older children and adults.

Training a baby to keep quiet in a room all by himself all night is an example of denying him the dependency he requires. Forcing a baby to wean from the breast before he is ready, and leaving him with a substitute caregiver before he has had time to bond with her, are other

examples. These things seem--on the surface--to make life easier for the parent, but in the long run, they make a parent's job much, much harder!

Babies who have been rushed into independence are the ones who become angry and aggressive toddlers. Once they reach two years old, their behavior is explained away as typical of the "terrible twos." Dr. Sears calls these negative traits "diseases of premature weaning," and stresses that they are not exhibited by all two-year-olds. He states, "In my twenty-two years of pediatric practice I have noticed that the most well-behaved children are those that were not weaned before their time." His usage of the word "weaned" applies not only to breastfeeding, but to all forms of attached parenting.

Listen to your baby, and make attending to him a priority in your life. Whining in a child is a direct consequence of a parent's failure to respond attentively to him. It usually occurs after a child has made several more pleasant requests for attention that have been rebuffed, or if the child is so used to being rebuffed that he turns to chronic whining as a last ditch effort to be heard.

There is simply no consequence-free way to avoid investing an enormous amount of your time and energy into raising your child. But the attention you give your child in the first few years will guarantee you enormous paybacks in all the years to come! Giving your time freely and

lovingly during the years your baby needs it most sets up an insurance policy for happier parenting for the rest of his childhood.

64. Keep a bag of tricks for getting baby out of a funk.

Every baby is going to have times when she's just in a funk. Don't you have irrational bad moods from time to time? Don't you love it when someone important to you knows just how to cheer you up? Every parent should keep a little arsenal of physical and mental weapons against that dreaded visitor, the inexplicable-baby-angst.

For very young babies, nursing and carrying baby in the sling will usually do the trick. But for times when they don't, your arsenal might include a particular song, a walk around the yard, or a way of holding her that she seems to like best. My best childhood girlfriend Christina was having a hard time comforting her infant Jessica when Christina's brother Lars was inspired with the perfect solution. He took his little niece through the house on a smelling tour! A baby's sense of smell is highly developed, and Lars found that opening jars of pickles or ketchup bottles and offering them for Jessica to smell distracted her from her crying. Christina used smelling tours often after that first experiment and they always worked!

For older babies, toys and objects that they haven't seen before often provide a quick-fix. With curiosities that won't be denied, members of the newly-toddling set are easily distracted by almost any new gadget

so long as it's sufficiently intriguing. My friend Sara is a veritable Felix the Cat who never fails to produce from the recesses of her handbag some spectacular rubber dinosaur or similar object of fascination, much to the delight of her daughter Carly and Tucker.

Tuck's grandma scored big points one day with TicTacs. The container is the perfect size and shape for tiny hands to hold; Tic-Tacs look and sound really cool when shaken; and best of all, babies can smell and almost-kind-of taste the Tic-Tacs by sucking on the plastic top. (Watch baby with Tic-Tacs! Make sure the container is tightly sealed and remove the paper label if you don't want your baby to eat it.) My husband's favorite standby is a little pen-light. Tuck is fascinated by his ability to turn it on and off, and by the affects he can create by shining it on the floor or walls.

When you find yourself with an unhappy baby and no props, question baby excitedly about his latest accomplishment. At around fourteen to fifteen months, Tucker never failed to cheer up when I would ask him, "Can Tucker make a LOUD noise?" Even if he had been crying, he would stop, smile, and show me just how loud he could be. The natural follow-up question was, "Now can Tucker make a QUIET noise?" He'd grin conspiratorially and give me his best whisper. Naming body parts is another fun game to play when you're stuck without any toys, and my husband is always able to diffuse the crabbies by flying Tuck over his head, airplane-style.

Figuring out what floats her boat is part of bonding with your baby. Use trial-and-error experimentation to create baby's personal list of favorite things and then try your best to fill her world with them-- especially on those days when she's blue and needs a little extra love.

65. Don't horde all baby's love for yourself.

The second half of baby's first year is when the attachments he has already begun to form become really strong. Most often the mother is the primary attachment figure, but it could be a father or caregiver as well. It is usually the person who the baby spends the most time with and gets the most attention from. But moms who worry that baby will get too attached to the hired caregiver at the exclusion of attaching himself to her, shouldn't be concerned. Babies have an unlimited amount of love to give. As long as mom makes an effort to be a special part of baby's life, baby will love her.

And even when mom is the primary caregiver, it is nice for baby to have an extended circle of special people to love. It makes it easier for mom to have occasional breaks from baby and know baby is happy. And special people don't have to be family members. Tuck lives several thousand miles away from his beloved true Auntie Aimee, but he has enjoyed a special bond with his substitute Auntie, my friend Cheryl, since his birth. Even during his most anxious period of separation anxiety, Auntie Cheryl was always met with a smile and open arms.

New mommies tend to make friends with other new mommies because new-mommyhood is such a huge and overwhelming condition that it can make women who would otherwise have little in common suddenly feel like soul sisters. But a babyless friend you had before your pregnancy, like our Cheryl, can be a real asset, too, as long as she's a fraction as in love with your baby as you are.

Occasionally talking about non-baby-related issues can feel like a fascinating break for a baby-brained new mom. Plus, when you want to go somewhere with a babyless friend, there's only one baby's erratic nap schedule to factor in. You can get together even if your baby is sick (mommy-friends won't come within miles of you and your sick baby.) When you go to the mall during holiday season, you only have one stroller full of shopping bags to maneuver through the crowds, and a ratio of two adults to one baby means there's always someone to hold the door open and there's always someone to drive and someone to play peek-a-boo.

66. See if you can nip colic in the bud.

Statistics indicate that twenty percent of American babies suffer from colic, which means you have a one-in-five chance of having one of them. But what is colic? Generally, any baby who cries for more than three hours a day, at least three days a week, for three straight weeks, is

labeled a colicky baby, especially during the period between two weeks and three months of age.

The very fact that we have a name for this situation implies that we in our culture consider it to be a normal syndrome, almost a medical condition. But in cultures outside our own, there is no word for colic, and its symptoms are unknown to parents who don't subscribe to our contemporary Western child-rearing practices. In cultures where mothers and babies are rarely apart, babies rarely cry, and any baby who fit the above definition of colic would be an extreme rarity.

It seems that we have created the colicky infant. Why, then, don't more American babies suffer? Researchers have speculated that while all babies crave continual, loving contact with a caregiver who responds promptly to their cues, some are just more adamant about having that need met than others. No matter what baby's natural temperament is, attachment-parented babies are far less likely to get stamped with the colic label. Here's why:

Colic has been associated with digestive problems, and babies who eat and spend most of their time in an upright position (held babies) are less likely to have gas than babies who are fed and left in a reclined or semi-reclined position. Breastfed babies have far fewer digestive problems than bottle-fed babies do. And studies have shown that being held tummy-to-tummy actually helps babies' stomachs perform better—as if the parent's tummy is teaching the little tummy what to do!

Another significant cause of gas is swallowed air from the act of crying itself. Babies who are comforted immediately—before their crying gets out of control—are therefore less likely to form painful gas bubbles.

Could the immediate response to baby's cries be the answer to the colic problem? Mommies in a mothers' group I attended were lamenting the hours they spent walking the floor with their colicky babies. One of my attachment-parenting friends asked these moms how quickly they picked their babies up once they began to cry. All admitted that they waited for several minutes in the hopes their babies would re-settle themselves. My friend tactfully suggested they try picking their babies up at the first whimper, just to see if it would make a difference.

It did! The moms who started picking their babies up right away found that they were able to prevent the crying from escalating to that point-of-no-return wailing that had been tormenting them for weeks. A conclusion could be drawn that some sensitive babies just have a lower tolerance for inattentiveness from their caregivers than others do. Once these babies hit their thresholds, if they are not being nurtured properly they go into a rage that is nearly impossible for them to get themselves out of, even once the nurturing begins. For colicky babies, that threshold may be well under a minute!

67. If night-nursing becomes more than you can bear, let Dad step in!

Many, many parents find the family bed to be a peaceful, cozy, wonderful way to carry their daytime parenting practices into the nighttime. A small percentage, however, become disappointed by baby's enduring enthusiasm for frequent night nursing.

Most babies will nurse during the night if given the opportunity, and a few snacks are not likely to disrupt anyone's sleep significantly. (See Way #31 for an explanation of in-sync sleep cycles.) But some babies, even after their first birthdays, still treat Mom like an all-night diner they take great pleasure in visiting every hour or so. There are moms who can shrug it off, knowing it will soon be a distant memory, and there are other moms who become tempted to throw in the towel on the whole co-sleeping arrangement.

If you ever find yourself a member of that second group, and if baby is well beyond his half-year birthday, try letting Dad break baby of the excessive nighttime nursing habit. *Parents* magazine ran a really nice story about a family that was having a difficult time sharing sleep because of baby's all-night nursing. The eight-month old son had come to associate nursing with sleeping and could only fall asleep when nursed. Unfortunately, he was also an extremely light sleeper, as were his parents.

Sleep deprivation from being woken hourly for weeks on end forced

the parents to make a change in their arrangement, but they were against the Ferber method or any other crib-training technique that required their son to “cry it out.” Instead, they let baby and Dad sleep together without Mom for a while. Whenever baby woke, Dad comforted him back to sleep—without enormous success for the first few nights, but with increasing success thereafter. This served the purpose of breaking baby of the need to nurse to fall asleep, while still letting him feel loved and valued.

The baby began eating solid foods with much greater gusto, and after several days he was sleeping through the night. The father writes, “I found I loved sleeping with my son. As I slipped in quietly next to him, moving his tiny feet away from my side of the bed, the band of fatherhood coiled tightly about my heart. His little face looked so trusting, sweet breath exhaling through his perfect mouth, eyelids fluttering with dreams. Sometimes one hand would reach out and grab me, tugging at the hair on my forearm, as if to reassure himself in his sleep that I was there. I kissed his forehead, and then we would sleep together, nose to nose, toe to chest. The closeness that my wife had experienced while nursing was suddenly, wonderfully, visited upon me.”

What an awesome bonding experience for fathers and babies! Dr. Sears provides more information about father-nursing in his excellent books, *The Baby Book* and *Nighttime Parenting*.

While the baby in the article responded well to a cold-turkey end to

his night-nursings, there is another approach that sounds even more effective to me. In *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems*, Dr. Richard Ferber outlines a plan to reduce night-nursing slowly so that the child won't experience hunger (since he is accustomed to consuming lots of calories during the night.) The idea is to nurse baby only once every two hours the first night, once every two and one-half hours the second night, once every three hours the third night, and so on until baby becomes accustomed to not nursing during night hours. Of course the ultimate goal in Dr. Ferber's book is for baby to be *alone* throughout the night, which is not at all the goal of this book.

So I'm suggesting a combination of the above two solutions, wherein baby will lessen night-nursings gradually with Mom returning to nurse him at the appropriate intervals (only if baby wakes up), and Dad will sleep with baby and pitch in with any comforting that's necessary in between. By about a week, baby and Dad may be sleeping peacefully through the night together, at which point Mom can return for good.

68. Help baby build muscles for developmental milestones.

Some parents are afraid that their babies won't reach developmental milestones like sitting, crawling, and walking, if they spend too much time in their parents' arms. Research has proven the exact opposite. Babies who are carried most of the time (in arms or in slings) sit, stand and walk earlier than babies who are not.

It turns out that once again nature has provided a perfect design. The exact muscles that babies exercise when they are straddling an active human are the ones that they need to develop for sitting, standing, and walking. Holding his head upright helps baby develop the balance necessary for these activities, while the extended position of his neck and back, and the flexed position of his hips all build muscle strength in precisely the needed areas. By the time he starts to sit or stand on his own, baby is accustomed to seeing the world from an upright perspective, which gives him an advantage over the baby who has spent most of his infancy horizontal.

In sharp contrast is the baby left to flail about in a container. The random movements baby is able to generate on his own do little to further his development. Eventually, through much trial and error, he'll figure out how to sit and walk, but not as smoothly and naturally as his carried counterpart.

T. Berry Brazelton says, "When I studied the Mayan Indians in Southern Mexico for their childrearing patterns, I longed for the revival in our society of at least two customs that we as a culture have given up. I longed for mothers to allow themselves more continual physical closeness with their infants and for the cushioning of the extended family for all young parents."

It's not easy for a couple to carry a baby all the time, and especially hard when one parent shoulders most of the burden. That's why slings

are essential, and extended family is so important—even if it has to be a faux-family you’ve created with friends and neighbors and hired help. On days when you feel resentment toward your heavy little bundle, try to keep the big picture in mind. This stage won’t last forever, but the rewards of raising a confident, loving, well-adjusted person certainly will!

69. Turn off the tube.

While there are some great educational television shows for older kids, babies under two years old don’t benefit much from them.

Television may seem like an ideal way to teach baby language, but studies have shown that babies don’t hear radio and television words in the same way they hear real spoken words.

Babies need human interaction to be able to pick out and separate words from one another. Television will sound like background noise to a baby, and may even drown out his chance to hear real human dialog being spoken. Visually, babies need the depth and movement of three-dimensional objects to stimulate their curiosity and help them to learn. Most babies show no interest in the television anyway. Turn it off and let your interactions with your ever-amazing child provide the entertainment for you both.

70. Help baby learn language!

Before your baby can move the tongue and mouth muscles to

make recognizable sounds, she already understands the meanings of many words, especially if you've been talking to her regularly since birth. You can build an impressive communication network with your baby before she begins speaking, by asking questions that your baby can answer with a nod or point. "Where is...?" are good starters, such as "Where is Mama's nose?" Tucker could correctly identify Mama's nose and Dada's nose before we could get him to simply point to Mama or Dada, I suppose because the nose game was more fun for him.

Babies delight in having their attempts at communication understood. The degree to which your child will enjoy talking will depend in part on how much you encourage her early attempts. You've probably had the experience of talking to someone who is nodding politely while not listening to a word you're saying. Does this reaction make you want to keep talking? Don't you much prefer talking to someone who hangs on your every word? Babies are the same way. If you watch your baby intently and make every effort to comprehend the words or gestures your little orator is delivering, you'll be rewarded with much more frequent communication attempts and a baby you can converse with at an early age.

Your baby will most likely say words incompletely or incorrectly before mastering them. Don't correct her or she may feel she's displeasing you and stop trying. It's better to just happily let her know you understand, then repeat the word back to her correctly and

cheerfully. Baby says, “guk,” as she splashes in the bathtub and you say, “Yes, that *is* your duck! Here comes your duck! What does a duck say?” Baby then sees your excitement that she correctly labeled the duck, and gets to hear it pronounced correctly a few more times in different contexts. The most important thing is for baby to realize that you understand her and you’re as thrilled with her accomplishment as she is.

Let baby take the lead. It may seem frustrating to you that your her first ten words include “quack quack,” “boom!,” “uh-oh,” and other basically meaningless vocalizations, but it’s not uncommon. Babies copy words that sound fun to them. Don’t worry that baby will delay learning more useful words because she’s spending time on the silly ones. On the contrary, baby’s incentive to add to her vocabulary will be increased by her enjoyment of the funny words she’s chosen as her first.

Pronouns are infinitely confusing to babies who are just getting the hang of labeling things. If Mommy is sometimes “Mommy,” but sometimes “I” and sometimes “me” and sometimes “she” or “her” and sometimes even “you” if Daddy is talking to her, it’s going to take a lot longer for baby to learn a label for that nice thing that is Mommy. You may feel silly doing it at first, but you’ll make life easier for your baby if you always use names when talking to her. “Mommy is going to give Natalie a bath now,” is easier for her to make sense of than, “I’m going to give you a bath.”

You might take baby for a walk around the house and notice the objects she pays the most attention to. Label those for her frequently and they'll be more likely to show up in her vocabulary than words that you might have selected for her. When she has a few words under her belt, let her talk to people other than you. You may have to serve as interpreter until everyone recognizes your baby's versions of words, but make sure anyone caring for her is up on the lingo so that baby won't be unduly frustrated at her sudden inability to be understood.

71. Learn to read baby's non-verbal attempts at communication.

Babies are capable of the same range of emotion that adult humans are capable of. They love and hate things just as intensely as we do. But babies have so much less control over their circumstances. That's why much of baby's crying is an attempt to signal you to change something for him. If you leave the room, and baby wants to go with you, he can't tell you, but he can cry until you get the message and come back for him. If you run into a friend who holds out his arms for baby, baby can't tell you, "I don't want to go to this person," so he cries in the hopes you will hear his concern.

Try, as often as you can, to tune into your baby's attempts at communication before he feels the need to cry. When you're about to leave the room, let baby know you're going. Maybe he'll hold his arms up to tell you he wants to come too, and you can avoid putting him into the

position to cry. Before handing him over to your friend, look to see how baby is perceiving the newcomer. You'll probably be able to tell from baby's face that a hand-over isn't going to please him.

Babies can understand language a lot sooner than they can form the mouth and tongue movements to speak it intelligibly. To get a realistic handle on how much baby is comprehending, think about how much of your spoken communication you believe that baby is understanding, *then double it*. It's frustrating for the little guys to understand you, but not have the power to make you understand them. Linda Acredolo, Ph.D. and Susan Goodwyn, Ph.D. remind us, "It doesn't matter how big or little you are, successful communication with other people makes life better. In fact, for the very young and helpless it may be even more important." Their book, *Baby Signs—How to Talk with Your Baby Before Your Baby Can Talk* helps parents work out a personalized sign language with their pre-verbal babies. Tuck and I used a lot of signs before we started conversing for real. It's helpful and a lot of fun!

72. Dine out with baby.

If you are respectful of baby's needs, eating out isn't difficult and the change of scenery can be entertaining for her. When baby is still an infant, she may fall asleep in the car on the way to your destination. If she does, and if your car seat is one that can be easily snapped out to

become a carrier, take your sleeping baby into the restaurant in her carrier. Many restaurants now have net baskets that hold carriers; otherwise you can turn a high chair upside down and place the carrier on top. Bring your sling in too, in case she wakes up. You will be amazed at the level of noise some babies can sleep through. Most often, it takes a sudden change in the noise level to startle baby awake.

If she wakes up fussing, transfer her to the sling and nurse her while you eat. If you've practiced with the sling ahead of time, you'll find it completely discreet and not difficult to eat around, though I'd recommend staying away from hot soups and beverages. My friend Kathleen was eating once with her son Cullen nursing in the sling. He was so comfortable that he didn't even complain about the pea that kamikazied from her fork directly into his little ear, later requiring some delicate extraction. If baby starts to fuss, a walk around the restaurant or out in the parking lot may soothe her. Be prepared to pack up the meal and finish it at home if need be.

If you've taken baby out all along, she'll be used to restaurants and be easier to handle in them when she's older. Many older babies enjoy sitting in restaurant high chairs more than sitting in high chairs at home because the new environment offers so much to watch. Bring along neat-but-nutritious foods like fortified cereals or bite-sized pieces of cheese, chicken, meatballs, cooked carrots, or green beans. Always have antiseptic wipes with you to wipe down the highchairs.

Most babies throw dishes on the floor, so place baby's food directly on the sanitized tray or table. Or, better yet, order those handy disposable placemats. They're plastic, with tape along the underneath edges so that they stick right to the high-chair tray or table top. When the meal is over, you just peel them up and throw away the mess. (You can order them through *Designs by Chad and Jake*, 877-FUN-KIDS.) Those bowls that suction themselves to the table would seem like a decent alternative, but I've never had much success with them. Tuck either figures out how to un-suction them or focuses all his energies on transferring the food out of the bowl onto the table anyway.

It is unanimous with my dining-out-parent friends that babies are much happier when they can sit outdoors. That's not always possible, of course, but sitting next to a window can provide entertainment too. If you are outdoors in the evening, make sure baby is properly dressed for a temperature drop and if insects are present, protect baby with an age-appropriate bug repellent.

If your baby is a fidgeter, don't put her in the high chair until your meal arrives. We get a booth and let Tuck stand, dance, and walk on the bench seat until the food comes. Some restaurants will let you call in your order before you leave home, thereby saving you a little downtime once you get there. And if baby is old enough for a kids' meal, ask your server to bring it ahead of the rest of the food.

73. Explore books with baby.

Parents often feel silly reading to a very young baby, so I'll just suggest that you regularly explore books with your child. If you sit down with your baby and a book often enough, you'll find that your baby will let you know how much he's ready for--and you'll be amazed at how quickly it changes!

Books are a perfect device for teaching babies the labels for things. You could start out with simple board books that have a single image and word on each page, or you could use any children's books with clear, bold, illustrations and pick out things to label for baby. Baby will make connections more easily if you label both the picture version and a version of the real thing whenever you have one handy. Point to the ball in the book as you say, "ball," then point to the ball on the floor and say, "ball." Babies naturally love to label things so you may be surprised at how soon baby can "read" these books to you.

Don't limit book exploration to labeling, though. Start reading simple stories to your baby as soon as you sense he'll stay interested for a few pages. Don't be offended if it takes many starts before the day he lets you finish the story—always let him determine how long the reading should last. If you underline the text with your finger as you read, he'll eventually get the message that those black squiggly lines in his books hold the story. That concept will help him to embrace learning to read when the time comes.

Make sure reading time is always pleasurable. When your baby is old enough to have preferences about things, get books that match baby's passions. If he's fascinated with the neighbor's cat, get a book about cats and intersperse your reading with lots of heartfelt meows and purrs. No matter what the book, use exaggerated voices and silly noises whenever you can. Your enthusiasm will elevate his. When he finds something you read funny, share his laughter. If you can laugh with him genuinely (fake laughs won't cut it) you'll enhance your bond and lay a rich foundation for future enjoyment of books together.

74. Help baby release pent-up stress.

While children should never be left to cry alone, crying and raging *can* be beneficial if you provide the appropriate emotional support. In her groundbreaking book, *Tears and Tantrums*, Dr. Aletha J. Solter gives the best advice I've seen anywhere on what to do when babies and children cry. She suggests that parents should not always look for solutions to stop a child's crying, but instead simply allow the child to experience ownership of her negative feelings and express them fully.

Of course, any crying situation must first be assessed to make sure baby's needs are all met. But when her demands are truly unreasonable, it's time to consider the possibility that she simply needs to release pent-up emotions.

Babies and toddlers experience enormous stress as they adjust to their ever-changing abilities and circumstances. Crying and raging are the only mechanisms they have to release this stress. When a parent consistently blocks the crying or raging, either by succumbing to every unreasonable demand or by ignoring the child (thereby, in effect, punishing the crying) the child will get the message that her negative emotions are wrong and she'll likely start suppressing them to please the parent. Having a child who cries less may sound convenient, but the child's accumulation of pent-up stress will soon render her whiny, irritable, or even sick.

It's very common for well-intentioned parents to try to keep their babies from crying. The pattern is handed down from generation to generation. If you think you may be blocking your child from this healthy stress-release mechanism, Dr. Solter recommends the following:

1. Take your crying baby in your arms, sit in a comfortable chair, and look at her face. If her eyes are open, look into her eyes. Feel her energy and life force. Hold her calmly, without bouncing or jiggling.
2. Take some deep breaths and try to relax. Be aware of the love you have for your baby.
3. Talk to your baby. Tell her: "I love you. I'm listening. You're safe with me. I will stay with you. It's okay to cry." You can also try to figure out the cause of the crying and verbalize your thoughts: "Did you have a hard day? Maybe we did too much today." Tell her that you

understand how hard it is to be a baby. Let her know that you want to help her feel better.

4. Be aware of your own emotions. If you need to cry with her, go ahead. Tell her that you are sad.
5. If she arches away from you or does not look at you, say, "Please look at me. I'm here. I want you to feel safe with me." Gently touch your baby's arms or face to reassure her of your physical presence. Don't be surprised if this causes louder crying than before.
6. Continue to stay with your baby and hold her lovingly until she spontaneously stops crying.

When a parent follows the above steps, baby knows that it is okay for her to feel negative emotions and she learns the valuable lesson that releasing them will make her feel better. *Babies need this support to be able to fully release their stress.* The worst thing a parent can do when a baby cries is say "Don't cry," or any other phrase that negates the feeling or makes it inappropriate. Crying should never be treated as misbehavior. Even if the reason for the outburst seems completely irrational to you, the child's emotional pain is real, and probably stored from prior incidents. Haven't you ever had a day when the tension has built inside of you until you eventually exploded over some infinitesimal problem?

Dr. Solter explains that when negative emotions get stored up and then erupt over some trivial setback, parents often suspect that the child

is turning on the tears for manipulative purposes. They resist responding lovingly because they don't want to encourage the child to have these outbursts. But it is impossible, she claims, for a child to cry at will-- unless she's storing some stress she needs to release. She likens crying to defecating. No one ever accuses a child of defecating just to get attention, and we don't worry that indulging defecating will make the child repeat it more frequently. Kids will do it exactly as often as they need to, and tears work the same way.

Many parents have found that when they started offering loving support during crying and raging, their babies and toddlers became more affectionate, kind, and joyous. Aggressive behaviors, whining, and even sleep disturbances can subside! Could some of your child's less endearing traits be the result of pent-up stress that isn't being released? Try Dr. Solter's technique and find out!

75. Indulge baby's possessiveness of you.

Even if baby has many special people accepted into his circle, by six or seven months, he will probably have chosen one (usually mom) as his most desired companion. Penelope Leach calls this relationship baby's "first, and arguably most important, love affair." Baby will not want to let you out of his sight and will be unhappy to have to share you with anyone else.

Leach explains, "He feels passionately for you physically. He will sit

on you, play with you, stroke and pull you, pop food (and worse) in your mouth, behaving as if your body belonged to him.” This behavior is normal and healthy and does not indicate future behavior that is clingy and overly dependent. Many experts agree that the stronger these early attachments are, the more independent the child will eventually become, as trust in the world is the underlying necessary ingredient for confidence and self-love.

It’s really helpful if you can keep that in mind while your child is going through separation anxiety because it can drive you insane. During the most intense period of separation anxiety, it can feel utterly impossible to calmly do anything for one moment by yourself. Often this phase means baby is no longer content just doing his own thing while you do your own thing in the same room. Baby wants to see exactly what you’re doing UP CLOSE and he wants to HELP YOU DO IT. It’s easy to become impatient with this possessive phase in baby’s development, but if you can remind yourself of its transience and keep your sense of humor, you might even enjoy it. How often do we get to be on the receiving end of such overwhelming adoration?

It is so much better for baby if you can indulge and revel in this intense attachment with him. Ignoring his cries to be with you will send him an unmistakably harmful message, and it won’t help you out of the problem since he’ll just become more and more anxious about your love. The more anxious he feels, the more determinedly he’ll cling.

Don't try sneaking out on him either. Even when he seems completely engrossed in emptying and restocking your underwear drawer, resist the urge to tip-toe into the next room for one little quick switch of the stereo dial. He'll be furious when he discovers your abandonment, and then he'll occupy himself less and less because he'll know he has keep his eyes on you at all times.

Take him with you whenever you possibly can and when you leave him use a familiar phrase to let him know what's going on. Say something like, "Be right back!" when you really will and, "See you soon!" when you'll be gone longer. When you do have to leave him with someone, make sure it is someone he knows and is also attached to. An acquaintance baby has been exposed to, but never had the chance to bond with, is not a good babysitter. A stranger is even worse. He simply cannot help feeling threatened in such a situation, no matter how well you know the person and how much you trust her.

As difficult as it can be to live with, separation anxiety truly is healthy and normal and your baby's feelings are very real and legitimate. Leach says, "The baby is practicing love for life. The more he can love now, and feel himself loved back, the more generous with, and accepting of, all kinds of love he will be right through his life."

76. Keep strangers at bay!

If the right set of circumstances prevails, your baby may not have

cause to exhibit any stranger anxiety at all. The right set of circumstances means that you do not ever try to hand baby to a stranger, leave baby with a stranger, or force baby to kiss or hug a stranger. If all strangers keep their appropriate strangers' distance, chances are baby will smile and coo for them and genuinely enjoy meeting them.

It is when people fail to treat babies with the same respect they extend to adults that babies become anxious. Would you enjoy strangers of all shapes and sizes grabbing at you and kissing you while your husband stood by smiling and encouraging them? Penelope Leach says, "We like to know people before we accept close approaches and physical affection from them; babies feel the same, and deserve protecting from those who try to treat them like pets."

Mommies often forget that their babies aren't actually a part of themselves. (Tuck and I spent so much time glued together that I sometimes referred to him as my best feature.) We think that if we recognize and love someone, baby should too. But unless baby has spent plenty of time in the company of Aunt Gloria, she may as well be a visitor from Mars.

If you want your baby to accept someone new into his circle, put in the hours. Let baby see how much you enjoy the person and how comfortable you are in her company. Ask her to talk to and interact with baby from a distance and let baby be the one to narrow the gap when

he's ready. Going at baby's pace will allow him to love her sooner than forcing her on him would.

Penelope Leach explains, "Anxieties over being away from you and being with people who are neither you nor known friends are real fears. Like other fears they will die down most quickly in babies who are given least cause to feel them. At present your baby is too newly in love with you to take you for granted. But if you can ride him through this period of intense and potentially anxious attachment on a wave of securely returned and protective adoration, he will come to take your love and your safety for granted in the end. Only when he has had a full measure of you will he be ready for other adults and for other children. Only a ground-base of confidence in his home relationships will make him free and ready to turn his attention outward as he gets older."

77. Minimize baby's fears.

Baby will most likely cry far less in his second six months than he did in his first, and for different reasons. Baby's cries at this time are more likely to be due to frustration or fear, and the things that make him afraid may appear totally irrational to you. The hair dryer, vacuum cleaner, and dishwasher disposal may have no effect on him, while the sound of your electric toothbrush may send him into fits of terrified crying. He may love the tub, the pool, and sticking his hands in your glass of water, but become hysterical if you try to wash his hands under

the running water in the sink.

Babies like the expected. Anything new or outside their usual routines has the potential to be scary for them. Even things that baby will eventually love, like swinging on a swing-set, might be frightening the first time. The more closely you can share new experiences with your baby, the more likely he is to ease into them and enjoy them. You might try swinging together on a grown-up swing first, for instance.

Even if you can't understand what causes baby's fears, it is important that you accept and respect them. After all, most of us have a few irrational fears of our own! The more you can steer baby away from things that frighten him, the better. Don't make a big deal, just support and comfort him when he's afraid, and respect the fear enough to help him avoid experiencing it again. Trying to get baby to face the fear and work through it will backfire and only intensify his anxiety. The less often baby is frightened, the faster his fears will disappear.

78. Don't fall for the old "good for his lungs" line.

Just to put the record straight, your mother-in-law is wrong. Leaving baby to cry alone is not good for his lungs or any other part of him. Your lack of attentiveness will cause him to cry much more than he needs to. Unnecessary crying expends an enormous amount of energy and wastes valuable calories. It floods baby's bloodstream with stress hormones. His gut tenses up. His breathing becomes labored and

irregular. His heart pounds. His limbs stiffen and his little facial muscles tense painfully.

Developmental psychologist Sharon Heller, Ph.D., says, “For prolonged crying to be normal and expected for infants, it would have to meet at least two conditions. It would have to be a universal characteristic of infants, which it isn’t, and it would have to serve some important survival function, which it doesn’t.”

No good can come from letting a baby cry unattended. Mothers who routinely ignore their babies’ cries--even for brief time periods--are at risk for becoming so tuned out that they fail to recognize the cries that signal pain or illness, and thereby neglect meeting their babies’ medical needs.

Listening to a baby crying is so grating on the nerves that it could even cause a parent to feel anger toward the baby for crying. The last thing a crying baby needs is an angry caregiver. Babies cannot be fooled by fake smiles or insincere warmth. They are born with an extremely high sensitivity to signs of hostility or withdrawal, particularly from their parents. This is part of their hard-wiring because their very survival depends upon loving care from people.

Prolonged, unattended crying has a negative effect on sleep patterns, causing the exhausted baby to fall into a deep, unhealthy sleep. It interferes with time baby could spend peacefully learning about his

world. And, as discussed elsewhere, it can lead to a devastating lack of self-worth and a host of other psychological problems.

79. Make baby smart while you make him happy.

Infancy represents a mere 2% of our lifespans, yet 80% of brain growth occurs within the first two years of life. How much baby's brain grows is directly proportional to how much stimulation it gets. Every experience baby has is an opportunity for learning. Babies are born craving experience, with an innate drive to learn as much as they can.

When you make baby a part of your life, especially when you carry baby through your life, think of the richness he gets access to! It's true that babies can be over-stimulated, but if baby is comfy in a sling against your body, he'll just hunker down and go to sleep when he's had enough learning for the moment.

Every sight, every sound, every smell and every object you let baby explore fires off neurons in baby's brain that branch out and grow, creating new neurons. Offering baby a constant flow of sensory input not only makes him happy; it makes him smart!

And it's surprisingly simple to keep baby plentifully stimulated. You don't need special toys or flash cards or anything more than what you already encounter every day in your regular life. Just holding baby makes the biggest difference of all. Studies on rats have proven the correlation between touch and brain growth. Baby rats that are touched

and petted frequently grow to become smarter rats than the ones that are not handled.

Every moment your baby spends in contact with you is a moment he's being stimulated and getting smarter. And every moment he spends alone in a container is a precious opportunity that's lost forever.

80. Skip the loveys.

Loveys are the security blankets, tattered stuffed animals, or other objects that so many children form strong attachments to. Many magazine articles and some books claim that attachment to a lovey, or transitional object, is a healthy stage in breaking away from dependence on a parent. Some even recommend supplying such an object when attempting to crib-train a baby.

But the experts on the other side of the fence warn that, while it is common, there is nothing healthy about fixating on an inanimate object for comfort and companionship. Children who are weaned from their parents' arms before they are ready take comfort in whatever soft parent-substitute is available.

Psychologically, of course, the substitution is a poor one. In a very obvious way, it trains the child to bond to things instead of bonding to people. As the child matures, he may seek out bigger and bigger material possessions to try to fill the void his early lack of parenting left in him. But things can never fill that void.

Babies who are brought up attachment-parenting-style don't form attachments to loveys—they form attachments to parents. Dr. Sears explains, “The infant who is accustomed to being in arms, at breast, and in mommy and daddy’s bed receives security and fulfillment from personal relationships. This infant is more likely to become a child who forms meaningful attachments with peers and in adulthood is more likely to develop a deep intimacy with a mate. The child who is often left by himself in swings, cribs, and playpens is at risk for developing shallow interpersonal relationships and becoming increasingly unfulfilled by a materialistic world.”

81. Don't underestimate the value of Dad!

Dads are totally undervalued in our society. The influence of a close relationship with Dad throughout a child's development has been proven to be completely necessary for optimal development of both girls and boys. Jails are full of fatherless boys who got into trouble while struggling to develop their masculinity without the help of a positive male role model.

Baby-expert Tine Thevenin says that the separate roles of each parent comprise the essential combined ingredients for optimum child-rearing. While mothers are typically nurturers who make a child feel safe and unconditionally accepted, it is fathers who encourage their children to do their best, stretch their limitations, and succeed in achieving their

goals. The two types of parenting complement one another to create the perfect balance, whereas too much of either one upsets the balance.

Luckily, dads are rising to the occasion! According to Michael Lamb, Ph.D. in his book, *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, recent studies have shown that dads today are spending 33% more time with their kids than dads did twenty years ago. That means that men are spending an average of two to three hours a day engaged with their children.

The period immediately following the birth of a child can be hard on a dad, though. He doesn't have the same automatic physical connection a mom does with the new family member, and he's likely to be frustrated if Mom becomes completely preoccupied with the baby, leaving him feeling like the odd man out.

In her excellent guide, *The Pregnancy Sourcebook*, M. Sara Rosenthal writes, "We now know that a significant number of new fathers experience depression. Like women, men who don't feel ready for a new baby or who have lower self-esteem are more at risk for depression. In addition, men who have unresolved conflicts with their own fathers are also prone to psychological problems or depression when becoming fathers themselves."

It's a wise investment of your time to make sure your husband feels appreciated for all the sacrifices he's making and the efforts he's putting forth for you and the baby. Most of all, resist the urge to believe

that you are uniquely designed to best meet all of babies' needs. Your husband needs time to develop his own bond with baby, in his own way. Both he and baby will benefit greatly from these early bonding efforts.

Many dads of breastfed babies worry that they can't compete for baby's affection because Mom has the market cornered on nourishing him. But studies have proven that cuddling and plentiful skin-to-skin contact have a much greater impact on bonding than feeding does. In a famous 1950's experiment with rhesus monkeys, Harry Harlow proved that touch is a more powerful bonding tool than sustenance.

He separated monkey infants from their mothers and built them two inanimate surrogate mothers to which they had equal access. One was soft and warm, made out of terrycloth and heated from the inside out with a light bulb. The other was made of hard wire, but had a bottle attached to it from which the monkeys received their food. The baby monkeys spent only as much time with the wire mother as they needed to ensure proper nutrition for themselves, but spent up to twenty-two hours a day clinging to the terrycloth mother!

When left alone with each surrogate separately, they showed some signs of attachment to the terrycloth mom and none to the wire one. These results clearly demonstrated that the mother monkey who *felt* more nurturing was preferred to the one who delivered the meals. (The monkeys still didn't fare well in the long run. Having been deprived of genuine contact with a real live parent, they grew up neurotic, asocial,

and sexually inept.)

It's loving touch that makes a lifelong difference in infants—monkey or human—and dads are just as well equipped to provide it as moms are.

82. Don't be a "no" machine!

Most crawlers and newly-toddling toddlers have an incessant habit of singling out and pouncing upon the very most off-limit thing in any room. Maddening as it is, try to think of this tendency as a healthy addiction. Your baby truly cannot help himself. If he didn't have this intense curiosity, he wouldn't learn things at the amazing rate that is normal for his age. And if he didn't strongly object to your interference with his learning, he wouldn't have the determination to persist when faced with life's little setbacks.

For a parent to avoid becoming a "no" machine requires diligence and creativity. When baby must be stopped in his tracks, alternatives like "Stop!" or calling baby's name in just the right tone of voice can be more effective than the standard "no." My friend Kim hated overhearing mothers trying to discipline their kids in public, so she worked out a private code with her 18-month-old, Christopher. Whenever he was headed for trouble, a sharp "Ahhh!" from Kim would literally freeze him in place until she got to him to redirect his behavior.

But no matter what word you use at the moment of impending disaster, you'll need to follow it up with a distraction in order to avoid a major upset for your child. You know your baby best, so keep a mental list of the things he loves so that you can always direct his attention to a favorite activity, song, or toy. If Tuck and I were anywhere near any light switch, I could always woo him away from a no-no by saying, "Tucker turn on the light?" He would nod enthusiastically and hold up his arms for me to carry him to the light-switch where I would cheer wildly at his expert manipulation of it.

After the first year, babies recognize a lot of words, even if they can't say them yet. Dr. Sears recommends using the word for the distraction as the word to stop baby. He says, "One pattern of association we noted in Matthew's developmental diary was that when I would say 'Go' to sixteen-month-old Matthew he would get the baby sling and run to the door. We used this ability to associate for distraction discipline: When we saw Matthew headed for major mischief we'd say 'Go.' This cue was enough to motivate his mind and body to change direction. We filed away a list of cue words to use as 'redirectors' ('ball,' 'cat,' 'go,' and so on). Of course, you must carry through and go for a walk or play ball or find the cat; otherwise your child will come to distrust you and you will lose a useful discipline tool."

Remember when using any discipline technique that your child will only learn what's off-limits and what's not if you are consistent. And

expect to be consistent for a long time. Most babies don't fully develop the cognitive ability to remember and act upon prior instructions until they are at least two years old.

83. Know when to encourage and when to rescue.

Your toddler will come across lots of dilemmas while practicing all those fabulous new skills that come with new toddlerdom. She may throw a ball farther than she intended and be unsure how to extract it from beneath the sofa. She may become wedged between a chair and an ottoman. She may want to navigate her wagon through a particularly challenging course around the kitchen island and into the family room, but become frustrated when the trip doesn't go smoothly.

When a loving parent witnesses any of these events, the natural inclination is to rush to the rescue. Instead, size up the problem. Is it one she could handle alone? If it might be, try encouraging her verbally. "Emily do it," may be all she needs to hear to increase her sense of her own abilities. Then, if she successfully gets past the difficulty on her own, what a boost for her self-esteem! If she doesn't, by all means help her, but try to do so in a way that enables her to feel at least partly responsible for the success. Say, "Mommy will help Emily," not "Mommy will do it for Emily."

84. Be a good boo-boo fixer!

When your toddler starts getting boo-boos, your reactions to his little injuries will go a long way toward shaping his feelings about himself, his body and how he will handle life's setbacks. Take your cues from him! If you rush in with a worried voice and face every time he stumbles, he will think himself fragile and the world a dangerous place. If you go to the other extreme and answer his cries with statements like, "Oh, that didn't hurt you!" or "Don't be a baby. It's not that bad," he will learn that you discount his feelings. He may even get the message that his feelings annoy you and so begin to stifle them. And in imitating your behavior, he will later be insensitive to other people's problems.

I love Dr. William Sears' description of how his wife, Martha, matches the child's emotions with her own. "Instead of locking into her own adult mind, she would click into the child's view of the problem. She would first match the child's emotional state. If the child's emotions registered a '10' on the boo-boo rating scale, Martha's empathy would rate a '10.' She was using the oldest negotiating trick in the world: First, meet people where they are, and then carry them where you want them to be. Martha would gradually begin lessening her worry signals, which would help the child wind down into the realization that the scrape was not the end of his life. He would realize that if the hurt was no big deal in Mommy's eyes, it was not worth wasting energy on, and he would go back to his play, happily sporting a Band-Aid."

Little bandages can deliver great psychological healing powers by giving toddlers the feeling that their pain is being recognized and that something concrete is being done to help. Alice Sterling Honig, Ph.D., professor emerita of child development at Syracuse University, says in *Parents* magazine, “Keep two kinds of bandages on hand. By giving children a choice, you’re giving them power—which is exactly what they need when they’re feeling vulnerable.” (She also warns that adhesive bandages can be dangerous choking hazards for children under five years old, and advises removing the bandage if you see your child sucking on it.)

Of course, if your toddler is lucky enough to still be nursing, you have access to the best and oldest boo-boo fixer there is. Breastfeeding moms have a reliable means of determining whether a boo-boo is serious or not because their babies are so reliably comforted by nursing. Whether it’s a scrape, a bump, a bruise, or just bruised feelings, nursing instantly stops the crying and starts the mending. If it doesn’t, they know the boo-boo’s major.

85. Give your toddler an adult-height view of your activities.

Toddlers love nothing more than to be included in your adult world. But little hands reaching into your cooking, cleaning, or hobbying can be dangerous and inconvenient. My friend Holly solved the problem

beautifully with her daughter, Taylor, by buying a lightweight, steel-frame backpack.

Taylor adores her perch on Mommy's back, looking over Holly's shoulder with a ring-side view of all those fascinating activities. Most parents utilize backpacks for outdoor excursions only, but around the house they provide an excellent way to accomplish the things you need to get done without excluding baby.

For the infant stage, the sling provides the perfect place to observe Mommy's doings. But when used around the house the sling is not as ideal for a toddler unless the toddler is tired and wants to fall asleep against a loving parent. (The sling is still perfect for toting toddlers on away-from-home outings, though!) In their homes, toddlers generally like to get around on their own but if mommy is involved in something that interests them they will want to watch. The backpack is a great place for them to watch from because the high perch is inherently fun and it keeps baby's hands an appropriate distance from the activity!

I visited Holly's home the other day and found her sitting at her table giving a friend a manicure with Taylor watching intently from above. One caveat: Holly warns against letting your toddler snack while in the backpack unless you want to try out gooey globs of partially chewed banana as your next hair conditioner.

86. Be flexible, even with your “no”s.

When you tell your toddler no and he cries and you decide to let him do/have/touch whatever it was he was after, you will undoubtedly get some raised eyebrows from grandparents or neighbors who have warned you not to let baby “get the upper hand.” Ignore them. There are battles that are worth waging and those that are not. Filling your child’s world with unnecessary restrictions will not make him a better-behaved child; it will just make him a bored, unhappy child.

A child doesn’t protest a “no” in order to try to gain control over you. It’s his world and his environment he’s trying to gain control over, and that’s a healthy part of growing up. His protest is just his way of letting you know he really, really wants to do that thing. If it’s something that you can tolerate, show him that you’re willing to be flexible and make him happy when it’s possible.

When the “no” has to be a firm one, calmly make that clear upon the first signs of his protest and do not waver. If he knows you’ll bend for him when you can, he’ll be more likely to back down and accept your dictate when it’s definitive. But if you frequently back down from even your very firm “no”s, he’ll only get the message that when he wails loud enough, you eventually say yes.

87. Indulge your toddler’s obsessions.

Around the time your baby starts talking you may be surprised to find that he has definite preferences among all the things he’s learned to

label. Your baby naturally loves to master new things, and by focusing in on one particular area of interest to him, he can enjoy a mastery of the subject more than he'd enjoy a more limited knowledge of a greater variety of things.

Maybe your baby has decided that dogs are his passion and he's become an expert at pointing out dogs wherever you go. He sees them not only in the neighborhood, but in books, in wallpaper at the pediatrician's office, on television, on boxes at the grocery store, and on his clothes. He barks and growls enthusiastically and may even deem horses, hippos, and any other four-legged creatures dogs as well. He will tirelessly point out dogs' tails, noses, paws, and ears for you, and will love toy dogs above all other toys.

As bored as you become with dogs, suppress your urge to direct baby's attention to broader horizons. In a confusing world that offers a continual flow of new information to process, a familiar, pleasing object is a welcome reprieve! Your baby's trying to assimilate a bunch of new stuff, and then he says to himself, "Hey, there's something I know about! Let's talk about that for a while!" Indulging his enthusiasm for his favorite topics will increase his self-esteem and make him even more interested in mastering new subjects to add to his repertoire.

88. Let baby direct his play.

For us grown-ups, play is extra. It's what we get to do when the

work is done. But for your baby, play is a very important and exhausting job. It's the means by which baby learns the different properties of the things around him, how things feel, what happens when he drops them or moves them in certain ways, how to control his body in order to manipulate things, how to interact with other people. Babies are instinctually driven to explore and learn. It looks like frivolous fun to us, but to baby it's another day hard at work. And since playing satisfies their basic need for intellectual stimulation, babies enjoy it immensely and have a great time doing it. Don't you envy the little laborers?

As tempting as it sometimes is when you've just brought home what you consider to be a fabulous new toy, try to temper your urge to direct baby's play. Your baby knows exactly what the best toy for him is at any given time, and often it will be one that never before carried the label, "toy." The best way you can help baby with his job is to observe him closely and give him the opportunity to play with the things that interest him.

Not surprisingly, babies often will choose the things that they see you "playing with" over the toys you provide solely for their amusement. Few babies can resist pots and pans with a spatula for banging. Other household favorites include a remote control with the batteries out, all shapes and sizes of rubber food storage containers, measuring spoons, an unplugged or de-battered telephone, wooden kitchen utensils, colanders, key-rings, ice-cube trays, cassette-tape boxes, whisks,

funnels, pieces of tape, or just about any small, interesting objects secured in sealed, unbreakable plastic bags.

Before you throw anything away, try to see it from baby's eyes. Would it make a great new toy for a few hours? Strewn amidst the pricey stuff in Tucker's toy boxes were often washed-out yogurt containers, egg cartons, plastic bottles, toilet-paper-roll tubes, odd socks, big and small boxes, plastic cups and other weird junk that he loved even more than Grandma's latest installment from FAO Schwarz mail order.

89. Ride your toddler's neediness roller coaster with him.

Toddlers are confused and confusing little creatures. One moment they're clinging to you like lint on wool and the next minute you can't catch them. This is completely appropriate toddler behavior! Your little explorer is relishing his newfound independence, but the more he realizes he can do without you, the more he needs to make sure he still has access to you.

You are the secure base from which he can venture forward, and only by striking a balance between the security of you and the thrill of independence will he be happy. Think of your toddler as a battery-operated being, and yourself as the battery charger. The time he spends wrapped affectionately in your arms is emotional refueling that enables him to enjoy time away from you. Let him be the judge of how much time

he needs with and without you and he'll always get just the right amount.

This roller coaster works on two levels. It operates within any given hour (or minute!) and it also works on a bigger scale, from month to month. Dr. Sears describes it like this: "The same child who spent two months in a snit may act like an angel for the next three. This developmental quirk can work to a child's advantage and to yours. Spot which phase your child is in. If he's trying to move away and grow up a bit, let out the line. During this phase, your child may seem distant from you; he may even answer back and defy you. Don't take this personally. This phase will soon pass. The child is just in the 'do it myself' phase and needs some space and coaching (including correcting) from the sidelines. One day soon, as sure as sunrise follows nightfall, you'll find your child snuggling next to you on the couch..." This disconnecting and reconnecting is healthy and as long as you are expecting it, you can make an effort to stay in harmony with your child's needs.

90. Respect your baby's wishes, even when they conflict with yours.

When you want your older baby to do something and he wants to do the opposite, how you handle your request can greatly affect its success. Remember, baby learns behavior by watching you. Respect for the other guy's feelings is the cornerstone of discipline. And if you expect your baby to respect your feelings, you've got to respect his.

Suppose you want to get baby in the car for a trip to the grocery store, but he's playing happily on the floor and doesn't want to be removed from his toys. Do you really have to leave for the store right at that moment? If you explain to baby that you need for you and him to go to the store, but you will wait a little longer until he is ready, he will learn that you value and respect his wishes. The following day, your departure time may not be negotiable, but baby will be less likely to put up a fuss because he has learned from you to respect the wishes of people he loves.

91. Meet normal toddler defiance with age-appropriate discipline.

The same very natural toddler tendencies that cause defiance are the ones that will help baby to succeed as he matures. Life would be easier for parents if babies were compliant little creatures who never disagreed with them, but it wouldn't be healthy for the babies. Without a very strong sense of determination, baby would never master all of the difficult developmental milestones ahead of him.

That doesn't mean you should give into baby's every wish or condone his defiant behavior. But understanding it will help you to deal with it better. The key to affective discipline is repetition. You must decide what the rules are and be very persistent in enforcing them. Don't become angry or frustrated yourself when you have to re-teach the rules

over and over and over again. Babies don't have great memories and only through LOTS of repetition will they learn.

When you need to discipline your toddler, don't do it haphazardly. Have a set pattern that you follow that your child will come to recognize, and make sure your tone is respectful. Use his name, look him directly in the eyes, and state your rule as simply as possible. Don't smile, but don't be angry either. Your manner should be authoritative and matter-of-fact. Physically remove the child from the no-no scene, or remove the forbidden object from his hand. Then substitute an acceptable activity or object, resume your friendly attitude, and put the incident behind you. Harping on his misbehavior will have no corrective effect at this age, and it will just up your stress.

Hopefully, you already know this, but **DON'T SPANK YOUR BABY!** Babies aren't bad. If baby persists with an undesirable activity even after you have used your most authoritative tone of voice, it is just because he does not understand or is simply too intent on the activity to be able to stop himself. Remove the baby from the activity quietly and without a big fuss. Then, when he is no longer involved with the source of the trouble, give him lots of hugs and praises.

Make sure your actions and words convey the message that you dislike a specific thing he is doing, but you love him always and unconditionally. You will know when your baby is capable of understanding the reasons he can't do certain things. Once that

understanding starts to kick in, you can explain each situation so baby will begin learning why certain behavior is not acceptable.

92. Make the best of the tantrum stage.

Sometime after baby's first birthday, you may start to recognize some crying bouts as true tantrums--little explosions of frustrated feelings that result from him wanting to do much more than he is capable of doing and not having the language skills to release his frustrations in any other way.

Almost all children go through a tantrum stage, but some have worse tantrums than others and some stages last longer than others. According to Kathy Levinson, Ph.D., author of *First Aid for Tantrums*, fourteen per cent of one-year-olds have tantrums every day, while twenty per cent of two- and three-year-olds have two or more tantrums per day. Tantrums are natural expressions of strong, bottled-up emotions that come with the territory of being a toddler. Even attachment-parented babies with very secure bonds to their caregivers will, at some point, become frustrated with their own limitations or the limitations that their caregivers impose upon them.

It's natural for your baby to cry when you take away a dangerous object, or say "no" to a forbidden activity. He doesn't like the turn of events and he's letting you know that. Immediately give a voice to his distress by empathetically naming the problem for him. "I know you

wanted to play with Daddy's electric drill. It's hard when you see Daddy using something and you can't share it. Let's read a book instead!"

If your cheerful attempt at distraction fails, and your child proceeds with a full-blown angry protest, he probably needs to release stress through crying. Don't yell or act disapprovingly toward him; you will only compound his misery. He'll be much better able to calm down if you yourself remain calm.

In their excellent guide, *The Discipline Book*, the Searses say, "Tantrums are due to frustration (your toddler is trying a complicated engineering feat and howls when it goes wrong), so don't ignore this need for help. Take this tantrum as an opportunity to connect: By helping your child out of a tight spot, you build authority and trust. Offer a helping hand, a comforting 'It's OK,' and direct his efforts toward a more manageable part of the task (for example, you slip the sock halfway onto the foot, and then he can pull it on all the way)."

If that doesn't help, the Searses suggest holding the tantrumer in a loving embrace. "Your strong arms in place around him give the message that since he's out of control you have stepped in to help him hold himself together. You may or may not be heard, but you can speak softly near his ear reassuring phrases like 'Mama's here. I'll help you. Show me what you need,' and so on."

Once baby has calmed down, try nursing or offering a nutritious snack. Tantrums often take place when baby is hungry or tired. Look for

patterns in the conditions surrounding baby's tantrums so that you can try to circumvent them before they happen.

Some experts advise ignoring or punishing tantrums but doing this will only tell baby that he is not entitled to have negative feelings.

Children need your loving guidance to help them deal with the scaryness of their out-of-control emotions. They also need you to set reasonable limits for them and to be consistent in enforcing those limits. Never reverse a decision based on a tantrum. When baby is raging over not being given a third cookie and you decide mid-tantrum to fork up the cookie, you're not only sending a bad message, but you're denying him the opportunity to release his frustrations through crying.

93. Mellow out a little aggressor.

Around the same time that tantruming surfaces, many toddlers also go through a phase of acting aggressively toward others. Like tantrums, aggressive behaviors are usually the result of frustrations that babies are unable to verbalize. The Searses say, "Toddlers become aggressive in order to release pent-up anger, to control a situation, to show power, or to protect their turf in a toy squabble. Some children even resort to obnoxious behavior in a desperate attempt to break through to distant parents."

My friend Joy successfully remedied aggression in eighteen-month-old Zoe with the following method. Whenever she hit or bit another child,

Joy would pick Zoe up, remove her from the play scene, and say “no hitting” or “no biting” firmly with a serious look on her face. She would sit, away from the others, with Zoe on her lap, facing away from her, for a slow count to ten. Zoe would be squirming to get down to return to the toys and other babies, but Joy would hold her firmly in place without talking to her.

After the ten seconds were up, she would happily take Zoe back to the group, sit down with her and model friendly play with the other children. Joy says it took a while, but once Zoe figured out that every aggressive action she took was going to result in removal from the fun, she curbed her biting and hitting tendencies.

Sometimes parents are on the receiving end of babies’ aggressive moves. The Searses suggest redirecting experimental slapping into a game of “Give me five,” and responding to biting by saying, “No biting. Ouchie. Hurts Mama!” and then redirecting the behavior with a happier expression, saying, “Hug Mama. That’s nice!”

If baby hits, bites, or kicks a parent out of anger, they advise the following approach: “Firmly but calmly announce ‘You may not hit’ and put her down...Give her the message that you will not let her hurt you. If you don’t allow your child to hurt when he’s very young, he will be less likely to let others hurt him when he’s older. You will be modeling to him how to say no to being hit by, for example, holding up a hand to stop the blow but not hitting back.”

Since baby is still likely to be angry over whatever the initial problem was, try putting his anger into words for him. “I know you are feeling angry that you had to return your cousin’s toy, but you may not hurt people.” Aggressive actions won’t go away without parent intervention so take the necessary steps to curb these behaviors as soon as they appear.

94. Show your toddler how to give and receive help.

Toddlers need a lot of help doing things. But as they start to become independent little people, they want to do many of those things by themselves. Be sensitive to your child’s desires for help or independence. Whenever possible, let your child decide whether or not to go it alone. If you deny your baby your help when he asks for it, or if you insist on giving it when it’s not wanted, he will form unhealthy associations to the concept of helping. You probably know a few adults with this problem—the ones who won’t accept help from anyone, or who rely too heavily upon help from others.

When your baby is old enough to understand, start asking for *his* help in doing things. Children love to help their parents. It makes them feel important and needed and demonstrates that helping one another is what loved ones do. Tuck’s favorite “helping” activities were laundry-sorting, sweeping, unloading the dishwasher, bed-making, putting away plastic kitchen stuff in his own low cabinet, putting away his toys,

putting away groceries after shopping, dusting everything he could reach with his own washcloth, and brushing Mama's hair.

95. Share laughs with baby.

Your baby's sense of humor may start to develop near his first birthday. Babies laugh from the time they're about four months old, but those early laughs are usually in response to joyful feelings or pleasant physical sensations rather than a reaction to something that strikes them as funny. Since one-year-olds can remember how things are supposed to be, incongruities can crack them up. (Our Uncle Gerry gets big laughs by wearing Tuck's socks on his ears.)

There is nothing in life as absolutely delicious as a baby's genuine belly-laugh. Every time I find something new that cracks Tucker up I simply cannot stop myself from cracking up with him--or from repeating the thing relentlessly. And it's almost impossible for two people to share laughter and not feel a heightened degree of bonding!

I'll never forget the first joke Tucker made all by himself at fourteen months. He knew the answer to the question, "What's your name?" and had been proudly sharing it with all the strangers in check-out lines everywhere for several weeks. But one day, when I asked him the same question, he cut his devilishly-twinkling eyes over at my husband and answered, "Dada!" and then dissolved in laughter. There was no mistaking the intention—this wasn't a lapse of memory or an identity

crisis. It was a joke! It was so darn cute that my husband and I laughed quite a bit over it, too, which Tucker loved. In fact, he loved it so much that for the next four weeks, the answer to “What’s your name?” was a gleefully uttered “Dada” every time.

Sharing laughter with your baby is not only a tremendous bonding tool; it’s really healthy too! According to Annette Goodheart, Ph.D., author of *Laughter Therapy*, laughter actually strengthens the immune system, enhances cardiovascular flexibility, increases intellectual performance and information retention, and rebalances the chemistry of stress hormones in your body. To think that you can do all that for yourself and your baby just by having a lot of fun!

My friend Julie accidentally stumbled upon a way to get laughs out of baby Luke when Luke decided one day that the sound of her sniffing his diaper was the most hysterical thing in the world. Initially, she was doing the sniff-test for obvious practical mommy reasons, but Luke’s response turned it into a favorite game. Babies love unusual noises, funny faces and quick, silly movements. Slap-stick pretend falls as well as real falls are likely to get a laugh. When baby laughs at a physical mishap, it’s not malicious, since baby is unlikely to realize that the faller is at risk for injury. It’s the surprise of the unexpected activity that baby finds funny.

My friend Reyna makes Tucker laugh uncontrollably by straddling a mop and pretending to ride it, horsey-style, all around the house. My

mom doubles him over with a gravity-defying dance to the tune of “Jingle Bells” that would make me rich if I relinquished a video of it to one of those home video shows. My husband cracks him up with exaggerated fake hiccups and all Auntie Cheryl has to do is shake her curly hair at him. Keep a mental list of what makes your baby laugh and take advantage of it as frequently as you can. Tried-and-true giggle-getters are great distraction-devices to head off tantrums and undesirable behavior.

By the second half of the second year, verbal jokes are as likely to get a laugh as sight-gags, and you’ll soon catch on to your child’s favorite funny-phrases. According to *Parents* magazine, “People tend to respond most to jokes that cut closest to their fears and obsessions and toddlers are no different. They prefer jokes about skills they’ve just mastered—like table etiquette, walking, or speaking correctly—which still carry an emotional charge. Laughter helps release stress and frustration.”

96. Give the button-pusher plenty of buttons.

Sometime around your baby’s first birthday, you may notice that no button in the house is safe from pushing, no knob is safe from turning, no switch is safe from switching. Babies love to imitate their parents and your toys are likely to attract him much more than his own. Televisions, stereos, phones, car-key remotes, light-switches, computer switches, brief case closures...the list of manipulatives that are irresistible to tiny hands is endless.

One solution a friend of mine discovered is to give the little technician his own grown-up toys—not the plastic, colorful versions that the toy manufacturers make, but real adult cast-offs found at garage sales and contributed by friends and family members. Any defunct gadget—like phones that are no longer in use, calculators, or computerized address books--could become treasured possessions as baby hones those fine-motor skills.

Whenever permitting it is feasible, let baby practice on your real stuff too. He will love the feeling of power from turning on and off a real light switch or fan and witnessing the results. Baby-proof your home to make sure that he doesn't hurt himself or damage anything valuable, then spend some time with him supervising his experiences with the things you decide are fair game for experimentation.

97. Use baby-friendly strategies to keep baby away from danger.

Keeping baby out of danger is one very common area of conflict between mommies and babies. Babies often seem to find the most fun in the most dangerous situations. Babyproofing the home can go a long way toward preempting conflict. The more safe you can make your home, the less you'll have to police baby's activities as he begins to crawl and eventually toddle around the house.

Whenever it is at all feasible, let baby do whatever it is he's trying to do. If there is a chance he'll get hurt doing it, make sure you're in a

position to head off injury. If you carefully supervise, but allow baby his thorough investigation of a dangerous situation, you might actually satisfy his curiosity about it, thereby saving yourself countless weeks of the stop-the-baby routine.

When you do have to stop him from doing what he really wants to do, distract, distract, distract. If he grabs a pair of scissors off your desk, you *could* grab them away saying, “No, no, scissors aren’t for babies,” but this approach is likely to frustrate and anger your little investigator. Instead, try a quick substitution of a book or ruler or tape dispenser. Talk about the exciting tape dispenser as you offer it with one hand, and chances are you’ll be able to get the scissors away with the other one without much argument.

There will be times when saying “no” is unavoidable. Just keep in mind that the less often you use it, the more impact it will have when you do. Most babies can understand “no” by about eight months. When a quick response is needed, a firmly spoken “no” will usually stop a baby in his tracks. It’s the difference in the tone of your voice that baby is reacting to. That’s why “no” works best when used sparingly. If you have established a close bond, baby wants nothing more than to please you, but if you speak sharply to him on a regular basis, he will soon become immune to your reprimands.

For very dangerous situations such as a toddler running into the street, Martha Sears suggests giving voice to the full expression of your

emotions. If you let baby see how terrifying his actions are to *you*, it will likely convince him that he, too, should be terrified to run into the street. If it's saved for only the most life-threatening situations, letting baby see your full-throttle concern will make a more lasting impression on him than distraction devices would.

98. Model politeness, but don't take commands personally.

When babies start talking in earnest, around the second half of the second year, they don't have any tact. Phrases like, "Give me!", "Do it!", and "That's mine!" are not meant to be bossy or demanding. It just so happens that these simple sentences are the easiest for the young grammarian to pick up. And when she sees that she can get the response she's looking for by uttering them, the newfound power is so delicious that she's apt to repeat them with increasing enthusiasm.

If you frown or convey the message that her words are inappropriate you may slow down her speech development. Save the etiquette lessons for a later date. Instead, happily let baby know that she has been understood and repeat her phrase, altering it slightly in the direction you'd like to see it go. Baby says, "Give me juice!" and you cheerfully hand her the cup, saying, "Juice, please? Okay, here is your juice!" Don't use a corrective tone; just act as though you are repeating her wish. If you tack the word "please" onto all of your requests to her, she'll be more likely to use it for her own requests.

Non-verbal etiquette is best taught by example, too. If you forcibly grab things out of your baby's hands, you will teach her to be a grabber. When you need to get something away from baby, hold out your hand and ask for it in a friendly, but authoritative voice. If she refuses to let go, gently pry her fingers off the object while matter-of-factly explaining why she can't have it.

99. Keep offering your baby the best stress-reliever known to toddlers.

The journey from newborn to pre-schooler represents the most stressful and drastic transition a human being ever makes. Even adolescence pales in comparison. The physical and mental upheaval that take place during these years play a major role in shaping baby's personality and setting the patterns by which he will deal with life as he matures. Yet many parents discount babies' emotions during this turbulent period as though they weren't real yet.

Luckily for babies, nature has provided them with an exceedingly healthful, nicely-packaged tranquilizer--mommy's breast. I'll mention one last time that nursing's unparalleled nutritional value isn't its only perk. The enormous psychological benefits of nursing are no less wonderful for toddlers than for infants. Don't succumb to our society's pressure to wean your child by a specific date on the calendar. Only by letting your

baby wean according to his own timetable will you take advantage of the total benefits package.

And the benefits are substantial. When baby hurts himself, nursing will immediately stop the crying (unless he is seriously injured). When he's over-extended and anxious, nursing will relax him. When he's inexplicably cranky and out of sorts, nursing will comfort and often cheer him. It's not a strange coincidence--it's the perfect script that nature laid out for mothers and babies. Babies who are prematurely weaned usually seek comfort from ineffective substitutes like pacifiers, thumbs, or blanket-corners, but none of these can come close to working the magic of the breast.

Mothers who force their babies to wean before the babies are ready think that by feeding their babies in other ways, they are providing a replacement for nursing, but they are only replacing a fraction of what their babies crave. The renowned psychiatric researcher John Bowlby says of the nourishing and psychological functions of nursing: "Each of these functions is of importance in its own right, and to suppose that nutrition is in some way of primary significance and that attachment is only secondary would be a mistake."

In the excellent guide, *Mothering Your Nursing Toddler*, Norma Jane Bumgarner advises, "The way to achieve a natural weaning if that is your objective is to feed and care for your infant without contrived interferences. Nurse on demand from birth. Forget about other foods

until your child asks for them. Then feed your child sensibly, for eating foods other than your milk in the first year usually is more for fun than for nourishment. Except in very hot weather a baby who has begun to ask for other foods does not need, besides your milk, any more liquids than he mooches from your cup or glass. An excellent way to avoid overfeeding or over-watering your baby is to let her do it herself, in her own way, and in her own time.”

She explains that some babies will naturally wean before their second birthdays, but most will do it sometime between the ages of two and four. The child may ask to nurse less and less frequently, or she may just suddenly stop. There are no reliable patterns, but every child will wean herself when she’s ready if Mama will just leave it up to her to do so. Breastfeeding makes mothering easier, not harder. There is no point at which it is in any way bad for your child or for you. Don’t cave into pressure to give up this mutually beneficial and loving aspect of your bond with your child just because you’re the last mom on the block still doing it.

100. Be your baby’s biggest fan!

Poor behavior is the direct result of poor self-esteem. Everyone recognizes the sad lack of self-worth that sufferers of child abuse are prone to. But since real, physical child abuse is thankfully not abundantly common, why is poor self-image so rampant? It’s because

abuse doesn't have to be physical or even especially bad for it to damage a child's delicate just-emerging sense of self.

Every day, good parents, in an attempt to teach their kids to be better, make disparaging remarks about them, are impatient with them, and hurry them through things that are important to them because they are not important by the parents' standards. They dismiss their children's interest in or curiosity about anything that the parents themselves don't deem worthy of attention. They nag them, discourage them, disrespect them, and treat them in ways they'd never treat other adults.

When anyone is treated in such way over a long period of time—and particularly when a child, who is still forming his self-image is—he begins to take on the ascribed attributes. He will see himself as the parent describes him--flawed, wrong, not fast enough or smart enough or good enough. And then the child will become those things. The only way to encourage self-esteem is to value and celebrate your child exactly as he is. The more you try to shape him, the more you send a message that the true person inside is inappropriate and in need of adjustment, the harder it will be for him to love himself as he matures.

Child-care expert Tine Thevenin says, "A child whose cries have been answered and whose emotional needs have been met, and who has not been taxed by having to handle feelings of hurt, pain, or fright when she is too young, grows up with a high level of self-esteem. She has been

shown that she is worth listening to and being taken seriously. She grows up feeling worthwhile and is unlikely to become an anguished adult forever trying to ‘find herself’ or defeat an inferiority complex.”

101. Stay in love.

During baby’s first two year she grows faster than she ever will again in her whole life. She goes from being a completely helpless, tiny blob with almost no control over her body to a very person-like little creature who coordinates limbs and brainpower to walk and talk and play and poke and be amazingly different from that little sack you brought home from the hospital.

It is during this teensy-weensy period in her life that baby forms the attitudes, personality traits, and disposition characteristics that will be with her forever. Will she start out life liking herself and feeling comfortable with who she is, or doubting herself and lacking trust in the world? To a very great extent, it’s up to you. Think of respect as a thing that can be measured in cups. However many cupfuls you give her during these crucial first years is the amount she’ll have for herself for all the years to come.

It’s no coincidence that the “Do unto others...” thing is a major big deal in almost every single religion around the world. It’s the perfect answer to any question that has to do with human interaction. When you have any doubt about how to do right by your baby, really try to get

behind her eyes and ask yourself, “If I were the baby, what would I want my parent to do?”

My friend Kenny tells his toddler Benjamin that he’s his best friend. I remember my mom using the same words with me when I was a child and how unbelievably special they made me feel. Don’t take for granted that your baby will know you love her just because you do. Children need to be *told and shown* how much they are loved every single day.

Taking advantage of the bond-enhancing practices in this book will help you to not just love your child, but to *be in love with her*. Think for a moment about how you act when you have fallen in love with someone. If you can feel that same level of admiration, connectedness, empathy, and awe for your child, with the same longing to please her and be near her-- then you are, without doubt, raising a happy baby.

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