

Raising a Happy Baby



Spoiled or Secure?

How to meet your baby's needs - without going overboard

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From the very first moment a baby is placed in the arms of a parent, the opening steps to establishing a sense of security begins. As with all things parenting, there are many schools of thought on how you should best respond to an infant. However, as Susan Spieker, the director of the [Center on Infant and Mental Health Development](#) notes, "They dance back and forth. Every family works it out different...The key is to give babies a secure enough base that they can venture out, engage in the environment, experience the challenges, rise to those challenges, and then make developmental leaps" (University of Washington, n.d.)

Opinions on how to best establish a sense of security for an infant range from [attachment parenting](#) techniques, to those who prefer a more regimented or program suggested approach to child rearing, such as using sleep training methods. Whatever you choose, there are a few overall guidelines that are helpful.

Engage the Senses

In short, enjoy that soft cheek, those chubby legs, and that sweet belly. Stroke your baby, explore [infant massage](#)

techniques, and rock and cuddle to heart's content – yours and theirs. Sing to them, talk to them, and even if it is your e-mail that you read out loud just so they can hear your voice. Just knowing you are laying the groundwork for a secure infant.

We now know that how a child is touched, nurtured, and spoken to in those early years makes a difference in how she functions later on in life...The truth is that science is finally validating what our common sense has always known (Snell, 1999)

Respond to Cues

There's this old school of thought that says you can spoil a baby by holding them too much, or responding too quickly. But actually, research has been showing just the opposite.

Darcia Narvaez, a Notre Dame psychology professor says, "Researchers found that kids who were held when they cry whose cries received quick responses in infancy and who were disciplined without corporal punishment – that is, they were better able to understand the minds of others – later in life. (As reported by Science magazine)

This doesn't mean you need to rush to your baby's side at the first whimper. And certainly older babies need to be soothed. However, what it does mean is that if your instinct is kicking in, and baby needs you, you will be establishing their sense of security when responding to their cries.

Comfort Objects

If you'd like, you can introduce a comfort object, such as a security blanket or a special toy to your baby. This is something baby can cling to when they experience any sort of distress, and find some comfort. Some parents encourage others prefer an infant self-soothe, perhaps by sucking their fingers. Some babies find only one comfort object to their liking – mommy's arms or baby chooses something parents would prefer they didn't. If that's the case, remember that these days are fleeting and you are giving the gift of security to baby, no matter what it is they choose.



Adopted Infants

According to AdoptiveFamilies.com, adoptive families can, and do, bond just as successfully as biological families. When in infancy you adopt your child, but there may be time for adjustment on both your part. Bonding is a very natural part of the process and that patience, consistency, and the use of the discussed techniques for connecting to adoption communities where you can learn from wise parents who have gone before you.

All of these techniques will go a long way into helping your family, whatever it looks like, to welcome a new one into your home and begin to establish the sense of security on which babies will thrive.

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