



Centre for
Perinatal Psychology
Helping you towards parenthood



Mutual Delight

Speaking for the Baby Campaign

Mutual delight means enjoying moments of connection through shared positive emotions, like warm eye contact, smiles, or laughter. These moments create joy, help build trust, and foster comfort with intimacy and emotion. Sharing excitement or curiosity strengthens bonds and teaches baby that positive feelings can be safely experienced together. Delight can be gentle or lively in nature.

Babies love to enjoy with both parents!

In two-parent family structures, babies do well when they experience mutual delight with both parents, whether that's mum and dad, mum and mum, or dad and dad. Both parents can be positively impactful to their baby's development through delighting in them.



Interestingly, dads tend to play more often and vigourously with their baby than mums. Dads tend to create more rousing excitement with baby and use more physical ways for excitable moments of shared delight, such as tickling, moving and throwing baby in the air. By playing in these ways, dads contribute uniquely to baby's social skills development, and help strengthen baby's left-brain hemisphere through activating problem solving.

These playful interactions also offer unique opportunity for co-regulation, where positive emotions are managed together. It is important to pace intense excitement, ensuring that your baby does not become overwhelmed and remains in a positive state. From the dizzy heights of excitement, a baby then needs to be down-regulated back to a calmer state again. This provides vital learning about managing intense feelings and contributes to baby's developing emotional regulation skills.

You are my mirror

When we share moments of delight, our faces often match, just like the dad and baby in this illustration. Amazingly, this really helps infant emotional development as they learn about their own feelings when they are shared and mirrored back to them. It's as if the parent's face shows how the baby is feeling.

In the voice of the baby:

"I would rather look at your face than almost anything, Dad. When your face shows me how I feel, it helps me learn about emotions."

Mutual delight is so important for parents and infants – enjoying each other is foundational to healthy relationships.

Daddy, you rock my world! You're so much fun. I love when you enjoy with me. What I see on your face matches how I feel inside!



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